# REVOLUTIONARY CHARLESTON, 1765-1800

Ву

# STANLEY KENNETH DEATON

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1997

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by

Stanley Kenneth Deaton

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

Matthew 17:20

Many people helped me to move this mountain. Though historical research and writing are inherently solitary and lonely exercises, they are impossible to do successfully without the help and support of others. My academic debts begin with my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, and the members of my committee, professors Jeffrey S. Adler, David R. Colburn, C. John Sommerville, and Samuel S. Hill (who graciously agreed to serve at the last moment). With remarkable patience they demanded that I rethink my ideas and question my assumptions, hammered away at my sloppy use of commas and passive voice, and continually challenged me to become a better thinker, writer, and historian. I could not have chosen better mentors. Finally, I owe a special intellectual debt to Dr. Carl J. Vipperman, who first kindled my interest in South Carolina history as an undergraduate at the University of Georgia.

I am grateful to Allen H. Stokes, Henry Fullmer, and Daniel Boice of the South Caroliniana Library of the University of South Carolina, Columbia; former directors Alexander Moore and Joseph Kitchens and director of publications Stephen Hoffius of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston; Elizabeth Alexander and Bruce Chappel of the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History at the University of Florida; Dr. John Ingram, director of Special Collections at the University of Florida Libraries; the staffs of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, the Charleston Library Society, and the University of Florida's Intertibrary Loan department; and Betty Corwine, Kimberly Yocum, and Linda Opper of the UF Department of History.

The Department of History at the University of Florida provided teaching assistantiships for more years than I had a right to expect. The University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences awarded a generous fellowship that allowed me to spend a summer in Columbia. And it was my good fortune and pleasure to work for three years with University legend Dr. Samuel Proctor in the Oral History Program. Special about to Dr. Barbara Oberlander of Santa Fe Community College, who took a gamble and gave me my first opportunity to teach my own class. Her kindness will not be forgotten.

My personal debts to friends and family are many. Daniel W. Stowell is partially responsible for getting me into this mess to begin with. If I was sometimes a burden to him, I cannot say with any honesty that I regret a minute of it. I was fortunate to enter the graduate program at the University of Florida with five men who turned out to be more than just colleagues. They made the long journey of classes, qualifying exams, and dissertations a little less bumpy and a lot more fun. My thanks to the "Fab Five," great friends, learned scholars, and pretty good poker players. Andrew "Grandddd" Chancey, Glenn "Brains" Crothers, Mark "Ignatius" Greenberg, Dan "Snuggles" Kilbride, and Chris "Gomez" Olsen. My aunt and uncle, Helen and Nathaniel Deaton, opened their home and hearts to me on my many research trips to Charleston. They are two very special people. April Arrington has become the sister i never had, a confident who shares

my joys, sorrows, occasional triumphs, and my love of the Panda's buffet lunch. Her warm heart and laughter helped preserve my sanity, and I count her friendship among my greatest treasures. Finally, many thanks to dear friends Don and Dawn Denny, Bryan and Lynn Drost, Bret and Shawna Hegi, Jim and Jan Johnson, and Scot Hawes, all of whom must have wondered what was taking me so long but had the good grace not to ask.

My greatest debts are to my family. Ken and Elaine Grizzle generously supported me throughout this endeavor, never questioning a decision that moved their daughter far from home. I love them both very much and am honored to be their son-in-law. My big brother Jeff bailed me out of many difficult school projects when we were growing up, but for some reason he made me do this one alone. I hope he is as proud of the results as I have always been of him. My parents, Bill and Jeannette Deaton, encouraged us to follow where our interests and talents led, and they gave us both the means and the freedom to find our own way. Their love and support has sustained me throughout my life, and nothing I have done--especially this degree--would have been possible without them. I love them dearly, and they deserve more than I can ever repay. Finally, my wife, Deborah Grizzle Deaton, allowed me to follow my dream and eagerly chased it with me every step of the way. This dissertation and degree are as much her achievements as they are mine. She has been my rock and my strength, brightening my darkest days, believing in me long after I stopped believing in myself. Debbie worked tirelessly, sacrificed much, and never once complained. There will be many stars in her crown, and I thank God every day that she chose to walk through life with me. Of Debbie, Mom, and Dad it may truly be said, "If I reached high it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants."

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## REVOLUTIONARY CHARLESTON, 1765-1800

By

Stanley Kenneth Deaton

December 1997

Chairman: Bertram Wyatt-Brown Major Department: History

This project addresses four major problems: the transforming nature of the American Revolution; the expansion of democratic politics and economic librarilism in the South; Charleston's evolution from the colonial South's largest city to an increasingly inward-looking, paranoid, and declining port; and the transformation of slavery from a ubiquitous American institution to a primarily Southern one. The American Revolution transformed Charleston and South Carolina from a world that emphasized hierarchy and deferential clite leadership to one marked by contentious, egalitarian politics and conomic libranism. The movement replaced the notion of a classical republic led by a disinterested, entrenched Charleston aristocracy with a "democratic political acconomy" where individuals openly acknowledged competing political and economis interests. Artisans, mechanics, yeoman farmers, and small merchants did not seek to exclude or

isolate themselves from the market economy but instead sought improved access to it in order to ensure that it would benefit all segments of society, not just lowcountry planters and merchants. Simultaneously, however, Revolutionary ideology forced many Americans to question and ultimately condemn slavery at just the moment when most white Charlestonians became convinced that their prosperity and identity rested more than ever upon slavery's survival and expansion. The contested meanings of the Revolution, growing abolitionism, and subsequent events in France and Santo Domingo combined to raise white levels of anxiety over slavery to a fever pitch. Many South Carolinians found themselves defending and maintaining by force an institution increasingly labeled anti-modern, anti-progressive, and anti-Christian by much of the rest of the world. Charleston subsequently became less "cosmopolitan" during the 1790s. increasingly erecting an intellectual blockade against hostile "outside" ideas and people at just the moment when its economic future shone brightest. Ultimately, the American Revolution in the South spawned a dual, Janus-faced, legacy: a strongly optimistic faith in political and economic liberalism that favored trade with all the world coupled with a growing anxiety over dangerous external ideas about universal equality that threatened to destroy the very fabric of Southern economic and social life.

### INTRODUCTION THROUGH THE PAST, DARKLY

Simon Schama, Dead Certainties (1991)

This study began with the question, "What were the effects of the American Revolution in the South?" Gordon S. Wood has recently portrayed the American Revolution as "the most radical and most far-reaching event in American history," a movement that democratized the nation and cleared the way for liberal capitalism. According to Wood, the Revolution created "the most liberal, the most democratic, the most commercially minded, and the most modern people in the world." Wood's thesis, however, contradicts two prevailing paradigms in Southern history. First, Eugene D. Genovese and other Southern historians argue that the South was dominated by patriarchal slaveholders committed to an anti-capitalist ethos that emphasized stanle cron aericulture. slavery, honor, and leisure.\(^1\) Opossed to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Gordon S. Wood, <u>The Radicalism of the American Revolution</u> (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 8, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> All of this literature is discussed more fully in chapter five, but see in particular Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South (New York: Random House, 1968), 3-39. This is perhaps the most

aggressive capitalistic behavior, Southerners supposedly remained anti-modern in outlook, anxious about capitalistic development, and culturally opposed to economic improvements. They eschewed the commercial behavior that paved the way for an increasingly capitalistic society in the North in the years after the Revolution. Secondly, historians of the eighteenth-century South have insisted that the American Revolution in the region was primarily a conservative, cautious, political revolt that simply consolidated elite rule, in this case replacing the Crown

influential articulation of the view that Southern planters were anti-capitalists. Genovese argues that Southern planters and their economic system were tied to the world system of markets but were not capitalists. "The planters were not mere capitalists, they were precapitalist, quasi-artisocentic landowers who had to adjust their economy and ways of thinking to a capitalist world market. Their society, in its spirit and fundamental direction, represented the antithesis of capitalism." Genomes, India, 23.

The best recent summary of this point of view is Douglas R. Egerton, "Markets Withou a Market Revolution. Southern Planters and Capitalism," <u>Dournal of the Earl Republic</u> 16 (Summer 1996): 207-221. Egerton agues that "if the Atlantic market shaped the plantation economy to its own ends, it simulation coulsy spawned a landed elite with economic interests and moral values antagonistic to the spirit of modern capitalism." <u>Egerton</u>, 220.

\*See most recently Joyce F. Chaplin, An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815 (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

See for example W.J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), 3-55; David Bertelson, The Lazv South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

For good recent discussion of the notion that the South developed differently than the rest of American and has been "as odds with the mainstream of American values or behavior and therefore has been constructed as a special problem," see the collection of seasys in Larry, J. offifin and Don H. Dyole, eds., <u>The Souths as a American Problem</u> (Athens GA: University of Goorgia Press, 1995), especially David L. Carlton, "How American is the American South" 33-56. The quote is on p. 1.

with a slaveholding oligarchy. Historians characterize particularly the Revolution in South Carolina-home to some of the most conservative, wealthy, and politically powerful Americans—as a limited political movement in which traditional aristocratic leaders survived the break with Great Britain. Robert M. Weir maintains that the Revolution in South Carolina was a "remarkably conservative movement" that never led to any extensive social or economic change. Almost every other historian of eighteenth-century South Carolina agrees. How then does one square

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Robert M. Weir, <u>Colonial South Carolina</u>; <u>A History</u> (Millwood NY: KTO Press, 1983), 332-333.

<sup>8</sup>Historians of Revolutionary South Carolina have denied the existence of a "radical" Revolution in that state, and generally agree, as S.R. Matchett has noted, on two points: that the Revolution was limited to political reforms and that the traditional aristocratic leaders survived the break with Britain, despite making a few concessions to backcountry unstarts. None has examined the "radicalism" of the expansion of political and economic liberalism in the post-war decades. S.R. Matchett, "Unanimity, Order and Regularity': The Political Culture of South Carolina in the Era of the Revolution." Ph.D. dissertation. University of Sydney, 1980, 6-7. Matchett argues for a "consensus model" as a way of understanding South Carolina political culture in the years after the war. "The 'aristocrats' held power," he argues, "not in spite of popular opposition but because they reflected the values and interests of the community at large." Matchett, Ibid., 16. See also Mary Catherine Ferrari, "Artisans of the South: A Comparative Study of Norfolk, Charleston and Alexandria, 1763-1800," Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1992; Rachel Klein, Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808 (Chanel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); George Winston Lane Jr., "The Middletons of Eighteenth-Century South Carolina: A Colonial Dynasty, 1678-1787," Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University. 1990; John C. Meleney, The Public Life of Aedanus Burke: Revolutionary Republican in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Weir, Colonial South Carolina, 332-333; E. Stanly Godbold Jr. and Robert H. Woody, Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution (Knoxville TN: University of Tennessee Press. 1982); Jerome J. Nadelhaft, The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina (Orono ME: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1981); George C. Rogers Jr., Charleston in the Age of the Pincknevs (1969; rpt., Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1980): Frances Leigh Williams, A Founding Family: The Pinckneys of South Carolina (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978); Richard

the new synthesis on the American Revolution--Wood's interpretation--with the prevailing model of development for the American South?

Charleston, South Carolina, as the colonial South's largest city, for a number of reasons proved to be an ideal place to examine the hypothesis of a "radical revolution" in the South. First, eighteenth-century seaboard commercial cities, according to Gary B. Nash, "predicted the future." Though America remained overwhelmingly rural, colonial cities were "urban crucibles," on the cutting edge of economic, social, and political change and the cradles of both American capitalism and American democracy. Transformations in American society first occurred in cities and then radiated outward to the countryside. In Charleston, if anywhere in

Bent Clow, "Ed-ward Rutledge of South Carolina, 1749-1800: Unproclaimed Statesman," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1976; Eve B. Poytherss, "Revolution By Committee: An Administrative History of the Extralegal Committees in South Carolina, 1774-1776, "Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1975; Robert M. Weir, "The Harmony We Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," William and Mary Quarterly 26 (October 1969): 473-50]. Mavriar, R. Zahniser, Charles Cotesworth Pinckners: Founding Father (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Posts, 1967); Aerone J. Nadelhaft, "The Revolutionary En in South Carolina, 1775-1788," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1965; Raymond G. Starr, "The Conservative Revolutions South Carolina Public Affairs, 1775-1790," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1964; George C. Rogers Jr., Evolution of A Federalist; William Loughton Smith of Chardeston, (1783-1812) (Columbia SC: University of North Carolina Press, 1962); Proderick P. Bowes, The Culture of Farly Charleston (Chapel Hill Not Chrisvesting Of North Carolina Press, 1942).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Gary B. Nash, <u>The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution</u>, Abr. ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), ix.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>In addition to Nash, see Richard D. Brown, "The Emergence of Urban Society in Rural Massachusetts," <u>Journal of American History</u> 61 (June 1974): 29-51.

the South, the effects of the American Revolution and its legacy should be most

Secondly, historians of the Revolutionary era have focused much attention on Northern urban centers over the past twenty-five years to the exclusion of the urban South. 11 Their findings, like Wood's, also contradict the prevailing themes of

<sup>11</sup> In addition to Nash's work, see Charles F. Olton, Artisans For Independence: Philadelphia Mechanics and the American Revolution (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1975): Eric Foner, Tom Paine and Revolutionary America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Dirk Hoerder, Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts. 1765-1800 (New York: Academic Press, 1977); Richard A. Ryerson, "The Revolution is Now Begun": The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765-1776 (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Howard B. Rock, Artisans of the New Republic: The Tradesmen of New York City in the Age of Jefferson (New York: New York University Press, 1979); John K. Alexander, Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760-1800 (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press 1980); Edward Countryman, A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790 (Baltimore MD: Johns Honkins University Press. 1981): Lynne Withey, Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island; Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century (Albany NY: State University of New York Press 1984); Elaine Forman Crane, A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985); Thomas M. Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Paul Gilje, The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834 (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Steven Rosswurm, Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and the "Lower Sort" During the American Revolution (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987): Billy G. Smith. The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800 (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990). Urban studies of the Revolutionary South include Richard Walsh. Charleston's Sons of Liberty: A Study of the Artisans, 1763-1789 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1959); Edward C. Papenfuse, In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Era of the American Revolution, 1763-1805 (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); Charles G. Steffen, The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812 (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Mary Catherine Ferrari, "Artisans of the South: A Comparative Study of Norfolk, Charleston, and Alexandria, 1763-1800," Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1992.

Southern history. Nash, for instance, found that in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York the Revolution brought "an internal struggle for a new social order." In Northern cities "plebeian urban dwellers" adopted street demonstrations, mass meetings, and extralegal committees to challenge the established elite and force their way into the political arena.12 Similarly, the Revolution in New York, according to Edward Countryman, "amounted to a democratic revolution" that firmly laid the "foundations of a liberal bourgeois society." New York's Revolution appealed to "artisans, white laborers, small farmers, and expectant small capitalists," while bypassing blacks. Indians, and women, none of whom "took part as a group in the revolutionary coalition, and none of them not much that they wanted out of its radicalism,"13 And in Philadelphia, Thomas M. Doerflinger found that merchants displayed "a vigorous spirit of enterprise" by capitalizing on the commercial opportunities stimulated by war. Indeed, he located the "entrepreneurial origins of American economic development" in the "drive and flexibility, the tolerance for risk, [and] the roving quest for new markets" that characterized Northern--but not Southern-businessmen during the Revolutionary era.14 These findings are broadly suggestive of the recent scholarship on northern colonial cities and demonstrate, in Countryman's phrase, that "the revolution was genuinely revolutionary," 15 But are

<sup>12</sup>Nash, Urban Crucible, 201, 246-247.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Countryman, A People in Revolution, xvii, 296, 288-289.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Doerflinger, <u>A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise</u>, 344, 355.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Countryman, A People in Revolution, ix.

these conclusions applicable to the colonial urban South as well? The consistent theme of Revolutionary urban history over the last quarter-century-that the American Revolution fundamentally reshaped Northern society, politics, and economies—directly contradicts the predominant interpretations in Southern history of an anti-capitalist South and a Revolution limited to minor political reforms. A study of the American Revolution in Charleston thus provides an excellent opportunity to test these competing and contradictory interpretations.

Thirdly, Revolutionary Charleston should furnish a better understanding of the Revolution's transformative effect-or lack of-upon Southern cities. Even now, upon first entering the city, a visitor cannot help but notice that Charleston seems frozen in time, the Federalist architecture of the 1790s remaining the dominant characteristic of the city. Though the eighteenth-century docks that once jutted out into the Cooper River along East Bay Street have long since disappeared, there are no skyscrapers, no subways, no factories, no concrete canyons. The absence of modern development becomes all the more startling when one learns that Charleston was the largest city in the colonial South, and the fourth largest city in America until 1800. How had it become an almost living museum? If it once rivated New York Philadelphia, and Boston, why did it not do so now? Why did the American Revolution not propel this colonial metropolis toward continued growth and expansion in the early Republic, as it did for Baltimore and its more Northern rivals? Conversely, what role did the Revolution play in Charleston's eventual decline and stagnation?

#### \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

This dissertation reconciles the contradictions between the new synthesis of the American Revolution and the dominant interpretations of Southern history. It addresses four major problems: the transforming nature of the American Revolution; the expansion of democratic politics and economic liberalism16 in the South: Charleston's evolution from the colonial South's largest city to an increasingly inward-looking, paranoid, and declining port; and the transformation of slavery from a ubiquitous American institution to a primarily Southern one. The first three chapters chronicle the enormously disruptive forces that shattered the stable world of Charleston's elite between 1765 and 1782. These chapters particularly emphasize the "internal revolution" caused by social, political, and economic unrest in the years before the war and the chaos and disruption of the war itself. Charleston's traditional leaders proved unable to contain the upheaval and a series of events--high prices, scarce goods, rebellious slaves, armed invasion, military occupation, and political and religious concessions to "outsiders"-combined to shake the foundations of elite power and dominance and paved the way for substantial political challenges in the post-war years. Chapter four examines the political results of the Revolution: the continued challenge to elite domination in Charleston, the incorporation of the city, the expansion of divisive democratic politics, and the backcountry challenge to lowcountry political hegemony which culminated in

 $<sup>^{16\</sup>sigma} Economic liberalism"$  is defined as an economic system stressing individualism, competition, and a free market economy.

constitutional reform and the removal of the capital to Columbia. Chapter five reviews the economic results of the American Revolution and the ways in which economic liberalism muted the divisiveness of democratic politics, healed sectional wounds, and secured Charleston's continued economic prosperity despite its political losses. Finally, chapter six explores how increasing white anxiety over slavery in the 1790s created an "intellectual blockade" against potentially threatening ideas and people. Revolutionary ideology, abolitionism, the French Revolution, and the slave revolt in Haiti combined to poison Charleston's previously cosmopolitan intellectual atmosphere and eventually enervated the effects of the American Revolution itself.

The American Revolution in Charleston was indeed a radical revolution, transforming Charleston and South Carolina from a world that emphasized hierarchy and deferential elite leadership to one marked by contentious, egalitarian politics and economic liberalism. The movement replaced the notion of a classical republic led by a disinterested, entrenched Charleston aristocracy with a "democratic political economy" where individuals openly acknowledged compering political and economic interests. "In these days," William Hornby asserted in 1784, "we are equal citizens of a DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, in which fealously and apposition must naturally exist, while there exists a difference in the minds, interests, and sentiments of mankind." The Revolution did not create modern democracy or capitalism, per set, but as Gordon Wood has recently argued, it certainly made both things possible.

<sup>17</sup> Gazette of the State of South Carolina. July 29, 1784.

It did spread the notion that all should benefit equally from the political and conomic opportunities created by the war. And ultimately the Revolution toppled Charleston from its dominant position in both South Carolina and the Lower South.

The years 1765-1800 were transforming ones in Charleston and throughout South Carolina. The Revolution as an event brought outsiders into the political process and gave them a voice for the first time. Simultaneously the Revolution created unprecedented opportunities for economic expansion and growth, and the elite quickly grasped the chance to invest in new agricultural techniques, new financial institutions, and innovations in transportation. Outsiders, both in the backcountry and within the city, demanded to be part of this process-not to overthrow the system but to participate as equals in the market economy and in a more participatory democratic politics. They petitioned for new towns and markets protective tariffs to encourage home manufactures, improved mads, bridges, ferries. and canals to link them more effectively with the economic metropolis, while simultaneously demanding that the political capital be removed to a more central. "plebeian" location. Artisans, mechanics, yeoman farmers, and small merchants did not seek to exclude or isolate themselves from the market economy--far from it. Instead they sought improved access to it in order to ensure that it would benefit all segments of society, not just lowcountry planters and merchants. This "democratic political economy" was not modern, industrial capitalism, nor was it radically anticapitalist. It simply sought to spread the benefits of the American Revolution equally throughout white society. This in effect was the "real" American

Revolution. It certainly did not completely level society, destroy all social ranks, redistribute wealth or property, or give complete equality to women and African-Americans. It did, however, fundamentally after the political, social, and economic relationships that bound white South Carolinians together.

This interpretation challenges the contention that a majority of Americans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century resisted the "transition to capitalism." Most historians who have addressed this subject have either ignored the South altogether or argued that the South was non- or anti-capitalistic. This thesis also disputes the notion that Southern planters were anti-modern in economic outlook, anxious about capitalistic development, or culturally opposed to economic improvements. Gordon Wood's argument that "no event in the eighteenth century

<sup>&</sup>quot;See especially Michael Mertill, "Putting 'Capitalism' in its Place' A. Review for General Literature," William and Mary Quanterly 25 (April 1989): 315-326; William and Mary Quanterly 26 (April 1989): 315-326; Michael Kulkoff, The Agnarian Origins of American Capitalism (Charlotteeville VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992), particularly chapter four, "Was the American Revolution a Bourgeois Revolution?" 99-126; Junes 4. Henteura, In-Origins of American Capitalism: Collected Essays (Boston MA: Northeastern University Press, 1991); Christopher Clark, The Rostos of Rand Zapitalism: Western Massachusetts, TRO-1860 (lithea NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Steven Hahm and Jonathan Prude, eds., The Contribuide in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rund America (Chapel Hill INC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). See also note five in Chapter Five below.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>See Cash, Mind of the South, 3-55; William R. Taylor, Casalier and Yanhee; The Old South and American National Character (New York George Brailler, 1961), 95-141; Bugene D. Genowese, The World the Shresholders Mode: Two Essays in Interpretation; Offidelitown CT: Westgess University Press, 1969), 165-194; William W. Freehling, Pelude to Civil War. The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1866-1836 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), Bertleson, The Larry South: C. Vann Woodwart, The Southern Behie in a Puritan World; William and Mary Quarterly 25 (day 1968), 343-370, reprinted in Woodward, The Southern Behie in a Puritan World; William and Mary Quarterly 25 (day 1968), 343-370, reprinted in Woodward, The Southern Behie and Southern Behie and Southern Behie and Southern Behie and Southern Behievers and Southe

accelerated the capitalistic development of America" more than the American Revolution is as equally true for the South as the North. 20 And finally, it rejects the argument that the American Revolution in South Carolina was a limited, conservative, primarily political movement.

Nevertheless, the American Revolution had a much darker side as well. Therefore this work also traces the evolution of slavery from a general American institution to a primarily Southern one. Despite-and in many ways because of-the sweeping changes in the political economy, the Revolution fastened the chains of slavery more tightly upon Charleston's—and the South's—slaves. The increased economic opportunities created by the war helped to renew and strengthen white commitment to the institution of slavery, purticularly as the shift to tidal rice cultivation and the expansion of cotton production further increased demands for labor. Simultaneously, however, Revolutionary ideology forced many Americans to question and ultimately condemn slavery at just the moment when most white Charlestonians became convinced that their prosperity—indeed their very identity—rested more than ever upon slavery's survival and expansion in the region. Thus Charlestonians and other Southerners became even more committed on an institution

Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia; (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 44-71; Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia; 1740-1790 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), esp. 88-138, 320-322; Wyatt-Brown, Southern Hongr, 88-114, 175-197, 327-361.

Nood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," in Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II, <u>Beyond Confederation</u>: <u>Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity</u> (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 78.

that would increasingly become defined as outmoded and uncivilized by the majority

Ultimately, the American Revolution in the South created a dual Janus. faced, legacy: a strongly optimistic faith in political and economic liberalism that favored trade with all the world coupled with a growing anxiety over dangerous external ideas about universal equality that threatened to destroy the very fabric of Southern economic and social life. The generation of South Carolinians that lived through and experienced the American Revolution was as excited about future commercial possibilities, as open to new technologies, financial institutions agricultural improvements, and potential for improved transportation as their Northern brethren. In that sense being Southern or slaveowners made them no less modern or liberal than other late eighteenth-century Americans. "The genius of our people." David Ramsav observed in 1783, "is entirely turned from war to commerce. Schemes of business and partnerships for extending commerce are daily forming 721 But the contested meaning of Revolutionary ideology, growing abolitionism, and subsequent events in France and Santo Domingo combined to raise white levels of anxiety over slavery to a fever pitch. Many found themselves defending and maintaining by force an institution increasingly labeled anti-modern, antiprogressive, and anti-Christian by much of the rest of the world. As a result, Charleston subsequently became less "cosmopolitan" during the 1790s at just the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, September 9, 1783, in Robert L. Brunhouse, ed., "David Ramsay, 1749-1815: Selections From His Writings," <u>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</u> 55, Part 4 (1965): 76.

moment when its economic future shone brightest. Charleston became caught on the horns of an enormous dilemma, simultaneously embracing the expansive economic opportunities of the American Revolution while increasingly erecting an intellectual blockade against hostile "outside" ideas and people.

Charlestonians thus failed to follow through on most of their grandiose schemes for economic improvements. The canals of which they dreamed that would link Charleston with the Ohio Valley and endless prosperity remained only dreams in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and other cities eclipsed Charleston in economic and political importance. The Eric Canal in New York firmly linked the Midwest with the North rather than the South. By that time Southerners had begun to seal themselves off from the rest of the nation rather than seek new ways to increase economic and commercial ties.

Nevertheless, though succeeding generations of South Carolinians failed to sustain an optimistic vision of Charlesson as the economic terminus of a vast Southern hinterland, we are compelled still to recognize the existence of a progressive, modern, liberal vision in the South before 1800 and its origins in the political and economic radicalism of the American Revolution. In many ways it represented a road not taken. Yet to overlook or dismiss it as unimportant or fleeting because of the cataclysmic events of the nineteenth century is to miss the significance of the American Revolution in the South.

### CHAPTER ONE THE CITY BEFORE THE STORM: CHARLESTON IN 1765

"In human terms Charles Town might best be described as the capital of an African foothold with a diverse minority of Europeans all under the shaping influence of English West Indian experience, forcibly wedged into American Indian realms."

D.W. Meiniu. Atlantic America. 1492-1880 (1986).

In 1765 Charleston, South Carolina, reigned as the undisputed metropolis of the Lower Southern British colonies. Charleston's original English and Barbadian settlers arrived on the west bank of the Ashbey River in 1670 at Albemarle Point and relocated downriver ten years later to the peninsula of land between the Ashbey and Cooper rivers. The city, with its wide and deep harbor, prospered chiefly because of favorable geography and the city's expanding role as economic entrepôt for a fast-growing agricultural hinterland. But the revolutionary events that began with the Stamp Act crisis in 1765 would ultimately shatter the stability and prosperity of the city and weaken Charleston's position of dominance in both the state and the region. When Charleston's powerful, confident elite rose to meet the ministerial challenge to their political authority, they found themselves in the center of an upheaval that would eventually alter not only their government but also their society as well. The consequences of the Stamp Act turnults of 1765 reverberated throughout the region, heralding like thunder the approach of more

cataclysmic storms to come.1

Historians have generally argued for the primacy of either geography or economic function in explaining why South Carolina had an urban center while the rest of the South did not. For instance, D.W. Meinig argues that Charleston flourished because of climate. Because Charleston was healthier and cooler than the surrounding countryside, planters and merchants built houses there and lived in town much of the year. Meinig. The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, volume one, Atlantic America, 1492-1800 (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 172-190. See also Herman Wellenreuther, "Urbanization in the Colonial South: A Critique." William and Mary Quarterly 31 (October 1974): 653-671; Leila Sellers, Charleston Business on the Eve of the American Revolution (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), 5. Others argue that Charleston grew because of the economic functions involved in marketing South Carolina stanle crops. The factors necessary for marketing rice differed substantially from those needed for marketing other southern staples, particularly tobacco. Chesapeake planters shipped tobacco primarily to London and Bristol; Carolinians sent rice to Britain, a number of ports in southern and northern Europe, as well as American mainland and Caribbean ports. Exporters thus had to have extensive knowledge of considerably more markets as well as maintaining correspondence with agents in those markets. Also, since rice was shipped in bulk. obtaining favorable freight rates became as important as choosing the right market. South Carolina planters thus sold their rice to merchants in Charleston who performed these delicate and difficult tasks for them. Tobacco planters consigned their crops to Britain, where they were sold by commission agents on the planters' risk and account. There was no need for a centralized market. Thus the centralization of the rice trade in Charleston accounts for the city's rise in the eighteenth century. The most recent and persuasive articulation of this view is R.C. Nash, "Urbanization in the Colonial South: Charleston, South Carolina, as a Case Study," Journal of Urban History 19 (November 1992): 3-29. See also Nash, "South Carolina and the Atlantic Economy in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," Economic History Review 45 (November 1992): 677-702: Peter A. Coclanis, The Shadow of A Dream; Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); David A. Smith. "Dependent Urbanization in Colonial America: The Case of Charleston, South Carolina." Social Forces 66 (September 1987): 1-28; David R. Goldfield, Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607-1980 (Baton Rouge LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 13-27; Peter A. Coclanis, "Bitter Harvest: The South Carolina Low Country in Historical Perspective," Journal of Economic History 45 (June 1985): 251-259; Edward K. Muller, "Regional Urbanization and the Selective Growth of Towns in North American Regions," Journal of Historical Geography 3 (January 1977): 21-39; Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman, "Staple Crops and Urban Development in the Eighteenth-Century South," Perspectives in American History 10 (1976): 7-78; Edward

Despite Charleston's distance from any of the three main river systems in South Carolina,<sup>2</sup> the Ashley, Cooper, Stono, and Wando rivers linked Charleston to the surrounding hinterland much more extensively than either Beaufort to the south or Georgetown to the north,<sup>3</sup> "It is a market town and the produce of the whole province is brought to it, for sale or exportation," the <u>London Magazine</u> reported, "its trade is far from being inconsiderable for it deals near one thousand miles into the continent."

K. Muller, "Selective Urban Growth in the Middle Ohio Valley, 1800-1860." Geographical Review 66 (April 1976): 178-199: Michael P. Conzen. "A Transport Interpretation of the Growth of Urban Regions: An American Example," Journal of Historical Geography 1 (October 1975): 361-382: Jacob Price, "Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth Century," Perspectives in American History 8 (1974): 123-186; Joseph A. Ernst and H. Roy Merrens, "'Camden's Turrets Pierce the Skies!': The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies During the Eighteenth Century," William and Mary Quarterly 30 (October 1973): 549-574. It should be noted that Carville and Earle emphasize "staple flows and their linkage effect" more than economic function, per se. They argue that "the size and spatial pattern of regional ports and their respective hinterland towns resulted from the stanle produced." And geography, of course, determined the stanles grown and how farmers transported them to market. The southeastern flow of rivers out of the North Carolina piedmont, for example. ensured that wheat and naval stores would flow into Charleston rather than to the North Carolina coast. See "Staple Crops and Urban Development," 11, 18, 62, 66-67, and "The Urban South: The First Two Centuries," in Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield eds., The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South (Port Washington NY: Kennikat Press, 1977), 35

<sup>2</sup>The Pee Dee in the northeast, the Santee in the central area, and the Savannah in the southwest. WPA Writers' Program, <u>South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> George C. Rogers Jr., <u>Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys</u> (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969, reprint, Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup>An Account of the City of Charles-Town, Metropolis of the Province of South Carolina, With An Exact and Beautiful Prospect Thereof, Copied From the <u>London Magazine</u>, June 1762, "<u>Yearbook, City of Charleston</u>, 1882 (Charleston SC: News and Courier Presses, 1882), 341-342.

Planters and small farmers from the Cane Fear River valley in North Carolina south to Pensacola in British West Florida shipped the region's great staple products--rice, indigo. tobacco, wheat, and naval stores-downriver, along the seacoast, or overland by wagon to Charleston, and by 1765 the city had become the largest in the Southern colonies. Indeed, the city's population of 8,000 in 1765-almost evenly divided between black and whiteranked as the fourth most populous in colonial America behind Philadelphia New York and Boston [see Tables 1-1 and 1-2].5 The streets of Charleston in 1765 teemed with royal officials, slaves, indentured servants, merchants, ministers, planters, lawyers sailors, ship captains, soldiers, immigrants, beggars, orphans, and prostitutes. Charleston offered a catholicity of tayerns, ballrooms, race tracks, library and benevolent societies. clubs, churches, coffeehouses, marketplaces, and theaters to meet all tastes. Between 1680 and 1765 Charles Town survived Spanish invasions and a succession of natural disasters to become the political, social, and economic capital of the region, dominating and overshadowing Wilmington, Baltimore, and Norfolk to the north, and Savannah and

<sup>&#</sup>x27;George Milligen Johnston, a contemporary observer, placed the white population in 1763 at 4,000; and the negron servants near the same number." George Milligen Johnston, A Short Description of the Province of Scouth Carolina (1770), 32, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, Lieutenant-Governor William Bull reported the population to the Board of Trade in 1770 as 5,000 whites, 5,331 blacks. William Bull to Earl of Hillsborough, November 30, 1770, in Transcripts of Records in Bertisish Public Records Office Relating to South Carolina, 1663-1782, 50 volumes, 32:387-388, Records Deposited With the Secretary Records of the Secretary of State, South Carolina Eparatement of Archives and History, Columbia (hereafter cited as SCBPRO). Carl Bridenbaugh relies on Bull's figures in Cities in Revolt. Urban Life in America, 13:21-176 (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 333.

St. Augustine to the south.<sup>6</sup> In short, by 1765 Charleston had become the capital "of the most flourishing of all His Majesty's American colonies."<sup>7</sup>

William Gerard De Brahm, the royal surveyor, described Charleston as "the most convenient and by far the richest city in the Southern District of North America." The London Magazine marveled that "here the rich people have handsome equipages; the merchants are opulent and well bred; the people are thriving and extensive, in dress and life, so that everything conspires to make this town the politest, as it is one of the richest in America." Publisher Peter Timothy boasted to his friend Benjamin Franklin that "I do not suppose there is a colony on this continent in so flourishing and promising a situation as South Carolina at present. Very elegant buildings are rising in almost every street by private gentlemen." In Indeed, the city contained over 900 houses and rent ranged from

See Sellers, Charleston Business on the Eve of the American Revolution, 3-48. On Savannah's growth in this period as compared to Charleston's, see Frances Harrold, "Colonial Siblings: Georgia's Relationship with South Carolina During the Per-Revolutionary Period," <u>Ceorgia Historical Quarterly</u> '73 (Winter 1989): 707-744; Barrold Wilkins, 'A View of Savannah on the Eve of the Revolution, 'Georgia Historical Country's 45 (Winter 1970): 577-584. See also Carl Bridenbuugh, Myths and Realities, Societies of the Colonial South (1982; Perpint, New York, Atheneum, 1975), 59-60.

Shelburne to Lord Charles Montagu, February 19, 1767, SCBPRO 31:309.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Louis De Vorsey, Jr., ed., <u>De Brahm's Report of the General Survey in the Southern District of North America</u> (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 90.

<sup>9&</sup>quot;An Account of the City of Charles-Town," 341-342.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>teter Timothy to Benjamin Franklin, September 3, 1768, in Hennig Cohen, ed., \*Four Letters From Peter Timothy, 1755, 1768, 1771, \*South Carolina Historical Magazins S' (1945): 162-163. See also Henry Laureus to James Grams, March 23, 1767, in Philip M. Hamer et al., eds., <u>The Fugers of Henry Laureus</u>, 14 vols. to date (Columbia SC: University o'South Carolina Peses, 1968-3, 5237-205.

£80 to £800 a year, depending upon the size and substantiality of the dwelling. 

"hany elegant" houses covered White Point at the south end of the peninsula. 

Governor's Bridge connected the city with its first suburbs north of town at Craven's Bastion, Meeting Street had been extended north to George Street, and in August 1769 the legislature fixed Boundary Street (present-day Calhoun Street) as the town's northern limit. 

"Onmercial improvements continued along the riverfront and harbor. The legislature built a new Exchange at the intersection of Broad and Bay streets and a new beacon and lighthouse in the harbor, while merchants constructed wharves along the Cooper River and, for the first time, on the Ashley. 

"Cooper River and, for the first time, on the Ashley." Christopher Gaddsen erected a large new wharf on the Cooper, just north of town, "reckoned the most extensive of its kind ever undertaken by any one man in America." 

Off South Bay Street, William Gibber's wharf extended over 300 feet into the Ashley River. Between November 1768 and November 1769 Charleston merchants exported over 123,000 barrels of rice and 380,000 hogsheads of indigo from Charleston's wharves. These two great stapkes represented 85

<sup>11</sup> South Carolina Gazette, August 17, 1767.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., March 7, 1774.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>George C. Rogers Jr., "The Charleston Tea Party: The Significance of December 3, 1773," South Carolina Historical Magazine 75 (July 1974): 155; South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, August 28, 1769.

 $<sup>^{14}\</sup>underline{South\ Carolina\ Gazette}, August\ 1,\ 1768.$  The foundation for the Exchange was laid on Monday, July 25, 1768.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Ibid., March 7, 1774; E. Stanly Godbold Jr. and Robert H. Woody, <u>Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution</u> (Knoxville TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 73-74. See Gadsden's advertisement for workers in the <u>South Carolina Gazette</u>, March 23, 1769.

percent of the exported goods valued at £404,056 sterling shipped from Charleston that year.<sup>16</sup>

Despite such outward symbols of economic prosperity, the Southern metropolis did not take substantial social problems, however. In addition to difficulties with the poor (which will be discussed), Charleston had insufficient and overcrowded jails, a workhouse full of "notorious bawds, strumpers, vagrants, drunkards, [and] idle persons," too few public wells, street lamps, and public stocks, too many vagrants, taverns, filthy streets, and bad roads, and an undermanned and underpaid down watch. Governor Montagus complained to London that "bailding a jail is a thing that is become now absolutely necessary, as the present one is so old and weak that the prisoners are frequently breaking out." The city lacked an adequate police force, and disgranted citizens seeking police assistance often found the Watch House on the corner of Broad and Meeting streets empty." Charleston's narrow streets contained "all kinds of filth,"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>William Bull to Board of Trade, December 5, 1769, Bull to Hillsborough, December 6, 1769, SCBPRO 32:122-130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>See grand jury presentments in South Carolina Gazette, June 8, 1765, June 2, 1766, November 9, 1767, May 9, 1768, January 25, 1770, February 22, 1771, February 22, 1773, May 24, 1773; South Carolina Gazette, and Country Journal. November 17, 1767; South Carolina Gazette, January 29, 1768, March 26, 1770; Lord Charles Montagu to Earl of Shelburne, August 14, 1767, CEPRO 31:413.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>The law required the town watch to be active from sunrise Sunday to sunrise Monday. This was in reaction to the Stono Rebellion, which took place on Sunday, September 9, 1739. For the Stono Rebellion and its aftermath, see Peter H. Wood, Black Majoritrs. Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion (New York: W. No.Yorton, 1974), 308-326.

while horses and cattle fed openly in the streets "to the great annoyance of the inhabitants," 15

Charleston's growing population consisted of four separate and distinctly unequal ranks: the clite, artisans and mechanics, common laborers, and slaves, 20 A rating elite of merchants, planters, and lawyers governed the city and dominated its political and social institutions. 21 The Commons House of Assembly, the lower house of South Carolina's

<sup>26</sup>The use of the term "rank" instead of "class" follows the lead of Gary B. Nash. Edward Countryman, and Stuart M. Blumin, who all argue that eighteenth-century society was organized vertically into ranks rather than horizontally into layered, antagonistic classes. Blumin writes that the term "ranks" identifies "the flow of influence, patronage, and deference within this system of interests, rather than the experiences and consciousness of separate classes." My account of Charleston in 1765 agrees with Blumin's description of eighteenth-century society as "profoundly elitist in its recruitment of political leadership and in its assignment of social prestige." Stuart M. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 17. Gary B. Nash warms that "eighteenth-century society had not yet reached the historical stage of a mature class formation." but nevertheless believes that historians can "understand more fully the origins and meaning of the American Revolution by analyzing the changing relations among people of different ranks and examining the emergence of new modes of thought based on horizontal rather than vertical divisions in society." Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: The Northern Scaports and the Origins of the American Revolution Abr. Ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), xii. Edward Countryman writes that the "middling sort" in New York "did not form a class." Edward Counryman, A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 12. Historians who do use the term "middle class" in the eighteenth century include Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, 332; Charles F. Olton. Artisans For Independence: Philadelphia Mechanics and the American Revolution (Svracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1975), x; Richard A. Ryerson, "The Revolution is Now Begun": The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765-1776 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 254.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>South Carolina Gazette, May 24, 1773, February 7, 1771, June 2, 1766; South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, June 20, 1775.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>A note is in order here about the use of the papers of members of the governing elite in this project, particularly the papers of Henry Laurens. Few of the papers of prominent

eighteenth-century South Carolinians have survived. The most notable exceptions are the papers of Henry Laurens. David Ramsay, and to a lesser extent. Christopher Gadsden The Laurens Papers are an indispensable source for the student of Revolutionary Charleston and this project, like most recent works on eighteenth-century South Carolina extensively utilizes this primary source, particularly in the first three chapters. I aurens was a successful merchant-planter in colonial and Revolutionary Charleston and played a prominent role in the Revolutionary movement in South Carolina. He maintained a vast political and commercial correspondence and commented on almost every aspect of the Revolution on a local, regional, and national level. This correspondence is preserved in the Henry Laurens Papers in the South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston and is currently being published by the University of South Carolina Press. Similarly . David Ramsay served in the Confederation Congress and was active in Charleston affairs in the 1780s and 1790s. His published post-war correspondence has been particularly helpful in illuminating events discussed in the last three chapters. Christopher Gadsden was another successful merchant who played a conspicuous role in the Revolution. His extant papers are much thinner than those of Laurens and Ramsay, but it too has been collected and published. Biographies of prominent eighteenth-century South Carolinians are rare because so few of their personal and business papers survive. The few biographies that have been written over the last thirty-five years by necessity tend to focus either on public rather than private lives ("life and times" biography), or on prominent families rather than individuals. The best published works are George C. Rogers Jr., Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston, (1758-1812) (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1962); William M. Dabney and Marion Dargan. William Henry Drayton and the American Revolution (Albuquerque NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1962); Marvin R. Zahniser, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967); Frances Leigh Williams, A Founding Family: The Pinckneys of South Carolina (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978); Carl J. Vipperman, The Rise of Rawlins Lowndes, 1721-1800 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1978); Godbold and Woody, Gadsden and the American Revolution; John C. Meleney, The Public Life of Aedanus Burke: Revolutionary Republican in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Kinloch Bull Jr., The Oligarchs in Colonial and Revolutionary Charleston: Lieutenant Governor William Bull II and His Family (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); Arthur H. Shaffer, To Be An American: David Ramsay and the Making of the American Consciousness (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991). There are no first-rate published biographies of Gabriel Manigault, John or Edward Rutledge, Ralph Izard, Henry or Arthur Middleton, Alexander Gillon, or surprisingly, Henry Laurens.

throughout the colonial period.22 Charleston merchants exported Southern staples to all parts of the British empire and many places beyond and imported the manufactured goods and luxuries--especially the human cargoes--that Charleston's planters demanded. The city's merchants had been growing in economic stature since the 1730s and by the 1760s had successfully monopolized Southern trade. Their influence originated from their beginnings as factors sent out as agents by British companies trading with the province. Many remained in Charleston, invested their capital, took risks, and flourished as Charleston became the most important trading center in the Southern colonies. Charleston merchants sponsored storekeepers at the heads of rivers and ferry crossings. where they bought produce, livestock, and commodities for shipment to Charleston.23 Most of these exports came to Charleston from the vast hinterlands of the midlands and backcountry of South Carolina and from the neighboring colonies of Georgia and North Carolina. Inland waterways provided the primary avenues to market, but many inhabitants made the journey over bumpy and bad roads. Lieutenant Governor William Bull noted in 1770 that 3,000 wagons laden with the produce of the countryside had come to Charleston the previous year.24 Merchants and planters thus required efficient and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Of the forty-eight members of the Commons House in 1765, over two-thirds owned property worth £5,000 sterling or more, and the other one-third owned property worth at least £2,000 sterling or more. No artisans ever served in the colonial South Carolina legislature. Jerome J. Nadelhaft, <u>The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina (Carolina (Ornon Met. University of Maine at Ornon Perss, 1981), 105. Assembly membership required 500 acres and 10 slaves or houses and town lots valued at £1,000. Rogers. Charleston in the Age of the Pincknews, 19</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Rogers, Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys, 11-12.

<sup>24</sup>William Bull to Hillsborough, June 7, 1770, SCBPRO 32:283.

affordable transportation links to Charleston. Grand juries complained often about dreadful conditions on public roads, while the Commons House of Assembly licensed ferry operators and passed legislation to clear rivers and construct new roads. <sup>32</sup>

Backcountry farmers who made the long journey to Charleston sold their deerskins, indigo, flour, wheat, hemp, and tobacco in the various city markets or to merchants and factors, and they returned to their homes with "necessaries and luxuries from every quarter of the globe. <sup>53</sup>

Charleston merchants maintained close ties with the Atlantic mercantile community throughout the colonial period. The November to May of each year the harbor filled with ships from all parts of the British empire, bringing manufactured goods to the colony and returning to European, West Indian, and North American ports with rice and indigo, the great staple crops of South Carolina. In January 1765 alone ships entered Charleston from Havana, Montsterrat, Lisbon, Jamaica, London, Bermuda, St. Kitts, Philadelphia, St. Augustine, and Aberdeen. Many of the city's merchants had forged economic links by serving as apprentices in London and returned to the province with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>See for instance <u>South Carolina Gazette</u>, June 2, 1766, and Sir Matthew Lamb to Board of Trade, March 10, 1767, SCBPRO 31:316-317.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Milligen Johnston, A Short Description of the Province of South Carolina, 36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>See David Hancock, <u>Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community</u>, <u>1735-1785</u> (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>South Carolina Gazette, January 17, 1765. Lieutenant-Governor William Bull reported to London in March 1765 that "at Charles Town within the last 12 months arrived 360 sal from different countries. At Beaufort 40, George Town 21." Bull to Earl of Halifax, March 1, 1765, SCBPRO 30:245.

valuable commercial ties. Henry Laurens entered business as a clerk in the offices of London merchant James Crokatt. After touring London, Bristol, and Liverpool in order to establish contacts, Laurens went into partnership in Charleston with George Austin in 1749. During the Seven Years War the pair grew wealthy trading in rice and slaves. When Austin retired and returned to England in 1762, Laurens invested in Menkin, a 3.000-acre plantation thirty miles north of Charleston on the Cooper River, combining rice and indigo production with his successful mercantile business. At his death thirty vears later, he owned over 20,000 acres in Georgia and Carolina.29 Gabriel Manigault grew wealthy importing and exporting primarily with the West Indies, Philadelphia, and New York. He began acquiring land in the 1730s, eventually owning several thousand acres and almost 300 slaves. During the Revolution he loaned the state government more than £650,000 before his death in 1781.30 Laurens and Manigault serve to represent the shared interests and fluidity of Charleston's merchant-planter community. Their fortunes, and that of their city, were inextricably linked 31

SWaher B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey et al., eds. Biographical Directors of the South Carolinal House of Regressentatives, 8 vols. (Columbs Sc University of South Carolina Press, 1977-1992), 2390-393; South Carolina (WPA) Will Transcripts, Wills of Charleston County, 24 (1786-1793); 1152-1188, microfilm, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, originals in Charleston County Courthouse; Rogers, Charleston into Age of the Pinchenys, 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Edgar and Bailey, <u>Biographical Directory</u>, 2:428-429. For Manigault's career as a merchant, see Maurice Alfred Crouse, "The Manigault Family of South Carolina, 1685-1783," Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1964, 317-339.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>See also R.C. Nash, "Trade and Business in Eighteenth-Century South Carolina: The Career of John Guerard, Merchant and Planter," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 96 (January 1995): 6-29.

Charleston merchants supplied the planters with credit, allowing them to expand their production through land, supplies, and above all, slave labor. The planter in turn paid off his debts in the winter when he brought his staples to Charleston. One visiting Newport merchant observed the intimate ties between Carolina planters and Charleston merchants. "The merchants who import merchantise from Europe supply the planters both by the piece and retail," he wrote, "and what they do not have stored in their shops they will obtain from others." Planters often refused "to do business with anyone but his merchant. This is so much so that although elsewhere they offer him what he needs more cheaply, he does not change."

The city's planters grew on their surrounding lowcountry plantations the rice that fed much of Northern Europe and the Indigo required by the burgeoning British Industrial Revolution. Parliament placed rice on the enumerated list in 1705, requiring the article to be shipped directly to England before reexport to any other port. In 1730 the British relaxed the restriction somewhat, allowing direct shipment to all ports south of Cape Finisterre on the northwestern coast of Spain.<sup>23</sup> In 1765 Charleston exported more than 107,000 barrels of rice. By 1770 rice exports had expanded to 131,805, an increase of 215 percent since 1730, and the highest figure reached during the colonial period. In fact, Charleston served as the rice port for the American colonies: Between 1765 and 1774 Charleston exported an average of 83 percent of all rice shipped from the colonies (see

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Thomas J. Tobias, ed., "Charles Town in 1764," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 67 (April 1966): 66.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Ibid., 67; Rogers, <u>Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys</u>, 3, 9-11.

Table 1-3]. A Merchants sent most of the rice to Great Britain, where British traders then re-exported the bulk to Northern Europe. Of the rice exported in 1766, 46 percent went to England, 29 percent to ports south of Cape Finisterre, 14 percent to the British West Indies, 4 percent to other American colonies, 4 percent to other West Indian islands, and 3 percent to Scotland. By 1775 rice ranked behind only tobacco and flour as America's most valuable export. Britain's growing cloth industry fueled the demand for Carolina indigo, and Parliament placed a six pence per pound bounty on the crop in 1748. The subsidy made indigo planting profitable, and production flourished, expanding from a small beginning of 5,000 pounds exported in 1746 to more than 335,000 pounds in 1765.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Plureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to</u>
1970, 2 vole, Weshington DC: Bureau of the Census, 1975, 2112. See also Kember
Morgan, "The Organization of the Celonial American Rice Trade," <u>William and Many</u>
Coantenity 22 (July 1985): 433-432; R. Douglas Hurt, American Agriculture, A Brief
History (Ames Li, Iwos Nate University Press, 1994). 44-61, Peter A Coclains, "Distant
Thander: The Creation of a World Market in Rice and the Transformations It Wrought,"
Thandrean Historican Review 98 (1993): 1050-1078; Henry O. Dehblin, "A History of the
American Rise Industry, 1685-1983; (College Station TX: Texas A & M University Press,
1983). 6-45; Dehblor, "The Colonial Rice Trade," <u>Angicultural History</u> 56 (January
1982); 221-243; James M. Cittlon, "The Rice Industry in Colonial America," <u>Assicultural History</u> 56 (January
1982); 231-243; James M. Cittlon, "The Rice Industry in Colonial America," <u>Assicultural History</u> 56 (January
1978); 1971, 1972, 1972, 1974, 1974; (vew Sceli Gray, History of Agriculture in the
Southern United States To 1860, 2 vols. (Washington DC: Carnegie Institution of
Washington, 1973), 1277-290.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Historical Statistics of the United States, 2:1193.

<sup>36</sup>Hurt, American Agriculture, 46.

Indigo production peaked in 1775 at 1.1 million pounds [see Table 1-4].<sup>37</sup> Planters also grew tobacco, hemp, silk, wine, oil, barley, wheat, flax, cotton, and ginger.<sup>38</sup>

The close ties planters maintained with Charleston's merchants and lawyers ensured that the Carolina elite developed a "community of shared values," as Robert M. Weir has noted. " Charleston lawyers, often educated in London, primarily served the city's merchants in securing debts. All of the colony's lawyers practiced in Charleston since no other courts existed outside of the coastal capital. Many lawyers, of course, doubled as planters or merchants as well. " The elite further cemented their hegemony

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>C. Robert Haywood, "Mercantilism and South Carolina Agriculture, 1700-1763, 200th Carolina Historical Magazine 60 (January 1959): 18, 20-21; Historical Statistics of the United States, 2:1189. Exports figures for indigo are available only for all South Carolina ports from 176 to 1775. Charleston figures are based on the Census Bureau's estimate that South Carolina ports from 176 to 1775. Charleston figures are based on the Census Bureau's estimate that Carolina ports from 1768-1773 [Historical Statistics, 2:1189a]. Using this figure, an estimated 26, 1924 pounds of indigo was exported from Charleston in 1765, and 873,316 pounds in 1775. For South Carolina Indigo production, see Coon, "Development of Market Agriculture in South Carolina, 1670-1785," 215-2586, G. Terry Sharer, "The Indigo Bonanza in South Carolina, 1740-90." Technology and Culture 12 (July 1971): 474-455, Sharer, "Indigo in Carolina, 1761-1796," South Carolina Historical Magazine 72 (April 1971): 94-103; Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States. 1290-297.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>William Bull to Board of Trade, September 6, 1768, SCBPRO 32:30-34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Robert M, Weir, "The Harmony We Were Famous For: An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," in Stanley N. Katz and John M. Murrin, eds., Colonial America: Essayx in Politics and Social Development (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 435. (Originally published in William and Mary Quarterly 26 (October 1969) 473-501.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>See George C. Rogers Jr., <u>Generations of Lawyers: A History of the South Carolina Bar</u> (Columbia SC: South Carolina Bar Foundation, 1992); Hoyt P. Canady Jr., <sup>60</sup>Centlemen of the Bar: Lawyers in South Carolina, <sup>70</sup>Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1979.

and their ties through selective marriages with other prominent families. <sup>61</sup> These links also served to reinforce the city's position as the political, social, and cultural center of the colony. Most planters owned houses in Charleston and spent much of the year there. They escaped the malarial conditions of their plantations during the summer, attended sessions of the Commons House of Assembly, and enjoyed the "season" of social and cultural activities which coincided with the busiest months of commercial activity. <sup>62</sup> Members of the elite joined together socially at the Monday Night Club, the Hellfire Club, or the Friday Night Club, or at meetings of fraternal organizations such as the Freemasons. The city's benevolent organizations included the St. Andrew's Society, the St. Goorge's Society, and the South Carolina Society. In addition, the elite congregated at the Charleston Library Society, the New Market racetrack, and at various balls, dances, plays, assemblies, and tavems. <sup>63</sup> The city contained a number of houses of worship.

<sup>&</sup>quot;See Richard Waterbouse, "South Carolina's Colonial Ellie: A Study in the Social Structure and Political Culture of a Southern Colony, 1670-1760, "PkD. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1973; Waterbouse, "The Development of Ellie Culture in the Colonial American South: A Study of Charles Town, 1670-1770, "Australian Journal of Bolitics and History 28 (1982): 391-404; Samuet A. Lilly, "The Culture of Revolutionary Carleston," PkD. Gibberger Colonial American University, 1972; Ferderick P. Bows, The Culture Geart Charleston, "PkD. dissertation, Manuel University, 1972; Ferderick P. Bows, The Culture Geart Charleston (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 115-130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>The usual time of shipping" rice, indigo, deer skins, and naval stores "is from the month of January to the month of May, the great consumption of rice in Holland, Germany, and Flanders, being early in the year, and to which very great quantities are annually exported." Petition of Merchants Trading with South Carolina and Georgia to the Board of Trade, December 18, 1770, SCBPRO 32-439.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>See Walter J. Fraser Jr., <u>Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern City</u> (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 129-135; Rogers, <u>Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys</u>, 6, 89-115; Suzanne Krebsbach, "The Great Charlestown Smallpox Epidemic of 1760," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 97 (January 1996): 30-

though the Anglican church had been the established faith since 1706. "Charleston had two Anglican churches: St. Philip's on Church Street, and St. Michael's at the intersection of Broad and Meeting streets. The Congregationalists and Presbyterians worshiped on Meeting Street, the French Huguenos and the Baptists on Church Street.

<sup>37:</sup> H. Rov Merrens and George D. Terry, "Dving in Paradise: Malaria, Mortality, and the Perceptual Environment in Colonial South Carolina," Journal of Southern History 50 (November 1984): 533-550; John Duffy, "Eighteenth Century Carolina Health Conditions," Journal of Southern History 18 (August 1952): 289-302; St. Julien Rayenel Childs, "Notes on the History of Public Health in South Carolina, 1670-1800." Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 1932, 13-22; Waterhouse, "South Carolina's Colonial Elite"; Samuel A. Lilly, "The Culture of Revolutionary Charleston"; David Morton Knepper, "The Political Structure of Colonial South Carolina. 1743-1776," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1971; John Christie Dann, "Low-Country Planter Society in Colonial South Carolina," M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1970; Robert J. Bagdon, "Musical Life in Charleston, South Carolina From 1732 to 1776 As Recorded in Colonial Sources," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Miami 1978; Eola Willis, The Charleston Stage in the 18th Century (New York: B. Blum, 1968): Mary Julia Curtis, "The Early Charleston Stage: 1703-1798," Ph.D. dissertation. Indiana University 1968; Bowes, Culture of Early Charleston, 115-130; Tobias, ed., "Charles Town in 1764," 68: Charles Caleb Cotton to "My Dear Mother," June 3, 1799, in Julien Dwight Martin, ed., "The Letters of Charles Caleb Cotton, 1798-1802." South Carolina Historical Magazine 51 (October 1950): 217; James H. Easterby, History of the St. Andrew's Society of Charleston, South Carolina, 1729-1929 (Charleston SC: Walker, Evans. and Cogswell, 1929); Randy J. Sparks, "Gentlemen's Sport: Horse Racing in Antebellum Charleston," South Carolina Historical Magazine 93 (January 1992): 15-30. esp. 17-21.

<sup>&</sup>quot;John Wesley Brinsfield, Religion and Politics in Colonial South Carolina (Easley Sc Southern Historical Press, 1983). S. Charles Bolton, Southern Angleiansim: The Church of England in Colonial South Carolina (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1982). Rev. Philip G. Clarke, Anglemanism in South Carolina (Sealey SC: Southern Historical Press, 1976); George C. Rogers Jr., Church and State in Eighteenth Century South Carolina (Charleston SC: Dalcho Historical Society, 1984).

while King Street housed the Quaker meeting. The city's growing Jewish population established the Beth Elohim Synagogue in 1749.<sup>45</sup>

Wealthy merchants, planters, and lawyers governed the city through the Commons House of Assembly until 1783, and during the colonial period none but planters, merchants, or lawyers ever sat in this body. By 1765, the Commons House had become the most powerful branch of government in the colony. The delegates jealously guarded their rights against all royal encroachments. The Commons House set all general property and income taxes, export duties, import duties on slaves, and appointed all tax collectors as well as the colony's treasurer, who answered only to the lower house. Though some historians have suggested that the planter-dominated assembly neglected

<sup>&</sup>quot;On this point see M. Eugene Simans, Colonial South Carolina: A Political History. IGS-31782 (Chepl Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), and Jack P. Greene, The Ouest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1176 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1963). The other branches of government were the governor, appointed by the crown, and the council, also appointive, which acted as the upper house of the legislature.

<sup>47</sup>Rogers, Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys, 19-20.

urban development, the Commons House spent a great deal of time attending to the city's needs. 

In 1767 alone the legislature passed legislation regulating the port and harbor, made plans to construct a new Exchange, Custom House, and hospital, extended existing streets while laying out new ones, investigated the conditions of the city's poor, and encouraged Charleston's trade with neighboring colonies by lifting duties on naval stores imported from those colonies. In addition, legislators mediated a dispute between merchants and owners of wharves, extended Meeting Street north to George Street, and built a bridge over the creek near Craven's Bastion at the north end of the Bay, 

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The Commons House passed all laws pertaining to the city, though the day-to-day governance of the city fell to various commissioners elected annually on Easter Monday. Voting requirements remained unchanged since 1721. All fire white Christian males over 21 years of age who had lived in South Carolina for at least a year, owned at least fifty acres of land, or paid twenty shillings a year in taxes could vote. Woters elected city commissioners for the two urban parishes, St. Philip's, created in 1704, and St. Michael's, formed in 1751 out of the southern half of the city, below Broad Street. Churchwardens, usually merchants, oversaw the maintenance of the city's poor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup>According to Blaine Brownell and David Goldfield, the planter "urban consciousness consisted of plotting an escape from Charleston before the first mosquitoes and after the last party. Associational activity probably consisted of dipping smift at the St. Cecilitis Society." Blaine Brownell and David Goldfield, "Southern Urban History," in Brownell and Goldfield, ("jur in Southern Bistory, 8-9.

Henry Laurens to James Grant, March 23, 1767, <u>Laurens Papers</u>, 5:237-238.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., <u>The Statutes at Large of South Carolina</u>, 10 vols. (Columbia, SC: A.S. Johnston, 1838-1841), 3:135-140.

Firemasters, also generally merchants, ensured that residents kept buckets and ladders near at hand and inspected buildings for potential hazards. Packers, mostly master coopers, inspected the packing of exports on the city wharves. Wood measurers, primarily artisans, safeguarded the city against exorbitant rates for wood and coal. The commissioners of markets and the workhouse collected fees for market stalls, enforced sanitary regulations, and also oversaw the workhouse, where the city housed sick folk, criminals, indigents, and runaway slaves. Finally, the commissioners of roads supervised the paving and cleaning of streets and set prices for haulage. Voters generally elected both merchants and artisans as market, workhouse, and road commissioners.<sup>11</sup>

The artisans who served without pay in these positions represented the "middling sorts," below the governing elite.<sup>52</sup> Though politically mute for most of the colonial

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>310</sup>The Government of the City of Charleston, 1682-1882," Yearbook, City of Charleston, 1881 (Charleston SC: News and Courier Book Presses, 1881), 325-377. Protestant Episcopal Church, S. Philips, Charleston, Becords, 1732-1910, WPA Transcript, 1939, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, copied from the original in the possession of St. Philip's Church, Charleston; Rogers, Charleston in the Age of the Pinchureys, 20-21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Artisans are defined as laborers who performed skilled work with their hands, and the term is used interchangeably with "incchanier" and "reafment" throughout this study. The term does not include unskilled laborers. For the term 'middling sorst," see note three above and especially Blumin, "Middling sorst," see note three above and especially Blumin, "Middling sorst," see note three above and especially Blumin, "Artisans of the South A Comparative Study of Norfolk, Charleston and Alexandria, 1763-1800," Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1992, "Richard Walsh, Chargeson's Sons of Liberty. A Study of the Artisans, 1263-1280 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1959). For recent scholarship on both Southern and urban artisans, see Johnson Miller Lewis, Artisans in the Norfo Carolina Backcountry (Lexington KY: University Press, of Kentucky, 1995). Howard B. Rock, Paul A. Gillje, and Robert Asher, eds., American Artisans; Crafting Social Identity, 1750-1850 (Bultimore M). Holms Hopkins University Press, 1995).

period, these workers nevertheless asserted themselves through their craftsmanship, and the fruits of their labors could be seen, heard, and smelled throughout the city. These craftsmen and women catered to the needs of the merchant-planter community, provided food and drink in the city, brewed beer, baked bread, butchered meat, designed and built lavish homes, painted houses, portraits, and coats of arms, fashioned clothes, furniture, shoes, watches, wigs, coaches, silver, jewelry, tanned hides, repaired guns, built ships, and packed staple crops to be shipped out for export. The exact number of Charleston's artisans in 1765 is unknown, but artisans comprised 25 percent of Charleston households in 1790. Between 1764 and 1807, nearly 2,500 artisans worked in the city. §

As the city's middling rank, artisans labored in the gray area between the merchant-planter oligarchy and the large black population. Skilled white artisans complained bitterly about the competition they faced from black labor, but many white

<sup>1720-1830 (</sup>New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Paul A. Gilje and Howard Rock. eds., Keepers of the Revolution: New Yorkers at Work in the Early Republic (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Billy G. Smith, The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800 (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Paul Gilje, The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834 (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Sharon V. Salinger, "To Serve Well and Faithfully": Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987): Steven Rosswurm, Arms, Country, and Class; The Philadelphia Militia and the "Lower Sort" During the American Revolution (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Charles G. Steffen, The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812 (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Nash, Urban Crucible; Howard B. Rock, Artisans of the New Republic: The Tradesmen of New York City in the Age of Jefferson (New York: New York University Press, 1979); Dirk Hoerder, Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 1765-1800 (New York: Academic Press, 1977), Foner, Tom Paine and Revolutionary America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Olton, Artisans For Independence.

<sup>53</sup>Ferrari, "Artisans of the South," 17.

artisans invested in slaves because of the scarcity of free labor in the city. Recent scholarship suggests that 81 percent of all artisans between 1764 and 1780 owned at least one slave, though they possessed only 11 percent of inventoried wealth.54 British mercantilism also worked against artisanal interest. Charleston craftsmen could not comnete with their counterparts in London nor did the city's elite encourage them to do so. Opulent planters demanded the finest craftsmanship the mother country had to offer. and the city's merchants eagerly imported English-made goods, all the while depriving domestic artisans of customers and profits. Royal officials even required Carolina governors to verify the subordinate position of American manufacturing. After a thorough search of the public records, William Bull assured the Board of Trade in 1768 that no public assistance had ever been given to encourage manufactures. He noted that while many backcountry homes kept looms to weave cloth for their own families, the government gave public assistance only to agricultural improvements. "Attempts to establish [manufactures] here," he wrote, "can never succeed to any degree, where there is so much room to employ labor in agriculture and trade with more profit."55

Artisans thus welcomed and encouraged non-importation of British goods when disputes over colonial tuxuion erupted in the latter half of the 1760s, and in some measure they indeed acted as the "advanced guard of rebellion." The Revolutionary

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>55</sup>William Bull to Hillsborough, November 30, 1770, SCBPRO 32:404

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup>Richard Walsh, "The Charleston Mechanics: A Brief Study, 1760-1776," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 60 (1959): 123-144.

movement offered artisans the opportunity to eliminate or at least curb the economic hegemony of their overseas competition, and in 1769 Charleston's mechanics demanded and received equal representation on the committee that enforced compliance with the colonial boycott. The artisanal community had always been shut out of provincial polities, but the Revolution would shatter the chains of deference that had kept them so long in silence.<sup>77</sup>

The third mnk of Charleston society consisted of common laborers and the city's poor. Though unskilled workers often found employment on Charleston's wharves and with skilled artisans, they faced unending competition from the city's ubiquitous slaves. While Charleston's elite grew wealthier during the 1760s and 1770s, the growing number of urban poor taxed the limits of the city's institutions of relief, as they did in contemporary Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. <sup>31</sup> The Rev. Robert Smith of St.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Most of the artisans owned property, and many could therefore vote under the suffrage requirements of the act of 1721. Many also sat on Grand Juries and could therefore voice their complaints through that vehicle. But no artisan ever served in the Commons House of Assembly.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>For the wealth and poverty of the city, see Barban L. Bellows, <u>Benevolunce Among Slawsholders, Sassing the Poor in Charleson, 1679, 1869</u> (Buton Rouge LA: Clustisana State University Press, 1993), Walter J. Fraser Jr., "The Gro Liller, 'Disorder,' and the Poor Children of Per-Revolutionary Charleson," South Carles and State University Press, 1993), Walter J. Fraser Jr., "The Gro Liller of State Charleson," State Charleson, "Charleson," See London, "Port Charleson," State Charleson, "Charleson," State Charleson, "South Carleson," State Charleson, 1977, Walterhou, "South Carleson," State Charleson, "South Carleson," Scouth Carleson, "South Carleson," State Charleson, "South Carleson," State Charleson, "South Carleson," Scouth Carleson, "South Carleson," Policy Carleson, "South Carleson," 25-92, Raymond Mohl, "Poverty in Early America, A Reapprisash: The Case of Eighteenth Century New York (Liv, "New York, History 50 (1969), 'S-7, Allan Kulknoft," The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston, "William and Marc Quarterly, 28 (1918) 1971, '37-64-11, Garp B, Mask, "Urban Wealth and Poverty in Pra-Revolutionary America, "Journal of Interdisciplinary History of (Spring 1976): 545-584, John K. Alexander, Rander Liben Submission, 1988, "South Scatter, States States, States States, States,

Philip's parish (which oversaw the care of the poor) requested the use of soldier's burracks in 1766 to relieve the overcrowded workhouse, which also served as a jail. 
Smith complained about the inhuman policy of housing violent prisoners with "the poor and sick, who may be, and often are, pious and well disposed persons." While exported staple crops continued to enrich city planters and merchants, wealth became increasingly concentrated between 1757 and 1762 due to the Seven Years War. © Consequently, tax rates to support increasingly ineffective institutions rose as well. Poor rates soared in the 1760s and 1770s, rising from £3,000 in 1755 to £6,500 in 1765 to £14,000 in 1775.41

Alarmed legislators investigated and blamed the problem on vestry and church wardens who failed to return the poor to their home parishes. In addition, they found that many arriving immigrants bound for the backcountry simply remained in town. Grand Juries frequently complained about the rising numbers of the destitute and continually requested

(Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).

Minutes of Vestry meeting, December 7, 1766, St. Philips Records, 44-45.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Stames Handle Easterby, "Public Poor Relief in Colonial Charleston: A Report to the Common House of Assembly About the Year 1767, "South Carolina Historical Magazing 47 (April 1941), 84-86; Fraser, "The City Blite, 'Disorder,' and the Poor Children of Pre-Revolutionary Charleston," 167-179. On the concentration of wealth, see Bearley, "Weath Distribution in Colonial South Carolina." For similar results of the Seven Years War in the urban North, especially post-war depression and greater concentration of wealth, see Nash, Lindan Carolile, 147-133. Nash, p. 157, Gound that "in all the seaport towns the greatest hardships imposed by the post-1760 shump fell upon the laboring classes."

<sup>61</sup> Easterby, "Public Poor Relief," 84-86; St. Philips Records, 135.

<sup>62</sup>Easterby, "Public Poor Relief," 84-86; Fraser, "The City Elite."

laws to prevent the poor from entering town from "all parts of this and many neighboring provinces" and further increasing the tax rate. 63

Slaves, of course, occupied the bottom rung of Charleston society. The city had the largest black population of any city on mainland British North America during the Revolutionary period [see Table 1-5]. Blacks comprised half of the city's residents in 1765 and 61 percent of the entire colony. Despite persistent white fears of a growing black population, the percentage of slaves in the city's population remained steady between 1760 and 1810, ranging from 51 to 54 percent [see Table 1-6]. The "black majority" in the lowcountry as a whole between 1775 and 1810 varied from 73 to 84 percent of the total population [see Table 1-7]. The city served as a major port of entry for slave traders in the American colonies, and Charleston merchants imported almost 42,000 slaves between 1760 and 1774.

<sup>63</sup> See South Carolina Gazette, January 25, 1770, February 22, 1773.

<sup>&</sup>quot;On the growth of the black majority in colonial South Carolina, see Russell I. Mennard, "Slave Demography in the Lowocountry, 1670-1704; From Frontier Society to Plantation Regime," South, Carolina Historical Mazazine 96 (October 1995): 280-303; Wood, Black Maiority: Wood, "Mesch Maiority: Wood, "Mesch Maiority: Wood, "Mesch Maiority: Wood, "Mesch Line Negroe Country"; Demographic Patterns in Colonial South Carolina, 1700-1740," in Stanley I. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese, eds., Base and Slavers in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies (Princeton Nitreathy Demography Procedor II): Third Child Compared Phillips, "The Slave Labor Problem in the Charleston District," Political Ssience Quanterly 22 (September 1907): 416-439.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Historical Statistics of the United States, 2:1173; Walter Minchinton, "A Comment on "The Slave Trade to Golonial South Coratinea, Peolitic," South Carolina Historical Magazing 95 (Jamuary 1994): 47-57; David Richardson, "The British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina," Slavery and Abolition 12 (1991): 157-165; Robert M. Weir, Colonial South Carolina, "Slavery and Abolition 12 (1991): 157-165; Robert M. Weit, Colonial South Carolina, "History (Willwood NY: Kry) Press, 1983), 178, Daniel C. Littlefield, Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina Gloston Carolina Chrosians Sates University Press, 1981). W. Robert Higgins,

a total of 6,520 slaves [see Table 1-8]. <sup>66</sup> One Charleston visitor insisted that "he had been mistakenly taken by his guide to Africa."

White and black intermingled constantly in a city where 8,000 people occupied the space of a few square miles and residential segregation was unknown. It seemed to a visiting Frenchman in 1777 that "one will meet seven or eight coloured men on the street for every European that he encounters." Slaves could be found throughout the city, working on ships and wharves, driving coaches, cooking and waiting tables, hired out and apprenticed to artisans, working illegally for themselves in competition with white artisans, and serving as common laborers. Timothy Ford, a New Jersey native visiting after the Revolution asserted that "in this country a person can no more act or move without an attending servant than a planet without its satellites." "I have seen tradesmen," he wrote, "go through the city followed by a negro carrying their tools—burbers who are

<sup>&</sup>quot;Charleston: Terminus and Entrepht of the Colonial Slave Trade," in Martin I. Kilton and Robert I. Robberg, eds.: The African Diagoner, Interpretive Essays (Cembridge MA; Harvard University Press, 1976), 114-131; Higgins, "Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negor Trade, 1735-1737; South Carolina Historical Magazine 65 (October 1964): 205-217; Elizabeth Doman, "The Slave Trade into South Carolina Before the Revolution," American Historical Energies 43 (104): 1925; 804-828.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Historical Statistics of the United States, 2:1173, 1168. Of the slaves imported in 1765, 68 percent came from Africa, 31 percent from the Caribbean. See also Peter H. Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Roee and Region, 1685-1790," in Peter H. Wood et al., eds. <u>Powhatan's Mantie: Indians in the Colonial Southsee</u> (Lincoln NE: University of Nebrosta Persa, 1989), 35-109. W. Robert Higgins, "The Geographical Origins of Negro Slaves in Colonial South Carolina," <u>South Aduntic Quarterly</u> O'W (Inter 1971), 34-47.

<sup>67</sup> South Carolina Gazette, August 27, 1772.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup>Elmer Douglas Johnson, trans., "A Frenchman Visits Charleston in 1777," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 52 (April 1951): 92.

supported in idleness and ease by their negroes who do the business, and in fact many of the mechanics bear nothing more of their trade than the name. \*\*0 Elite Charlestonians might resent the rising numbers of poor whites, but they complained most frequently about the behavior of their slaves. They protested that slaves sold in the city's markets, hired their own time, congregated in large numbers, frequented taverns, cursed and swore in the city streets, refused to work, dressed inappropriately, gambled, and always seemed to behave in an insolent manner. One inhabitant wondered if "the laws of this province extend to the punishment of vices in Negroes?" Greater economic opportunity and less white supervision combined to give urban slaves more autonomy than their rural counterparts, and many whites considered Charleston's slaves more "rude, unmannerly, insolent, and shameless" than country slaves. \*\*

Charleston's large slave population kept whites constantly on edge. Lieutenant Governor William Bull maintained in 1770 that "the state of slavery is as comfortable in this province as such a state can be," but anxious planters feared that the lure of freedom

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup>Joseph W. Barnwell, ed., "Diary of Timothy Ford," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 13 (July 1912): 142.

<sup>&</sup>quot;South Carolina Gazette, August 27, 1772. Sec Loren Schweninger," Slave Independence and Emerpties in South Carolina, 1780-1865," South Carolina, Historical Magazine, 93 (April 1992): 101-125; Philip D. Morgan, "Black Lici in Eighteenth-Century Charleston," Perspectives in Agnetican History New Series 1 (1948): 187-232; Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry, 1760-1810," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., Slavers and Freedom in the Ages of the American Revolution (Urban IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 83-142; Morgan, "Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700 to 1809. "William and Marg Quarterly 39 (October 1982): 563-599; Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820-1860 (New York: Octool University Press, 1964).

would "raise ideas in [slaves] of an interest opposite to their masters."71 South Carolina had weathered the Stono Rebellion of 1739, but fears of another, more widespread. uprising always bubbled beneath the surface.72 In December 1765, rumors spread through Charleston of an impending slave revolt during the Christmas season, traditionally an extended holiday for slaves. Provincial authorities quickly called out the militia, while Lt. Governor Bull brought down forty-seven Catawba Indians from the backcountry to hunt down and kill the supposed rebels.73 Henry Laurens described the scene in Charleston: "Patrols were riding day and night for 10 to 14 days in most bitter weather and here in town all were soldiers in arms for more than a week." This uprising--like so many others--failed to materialize, and Laurens noted wryly that the whole affair ended with the "banishment of one fellow, not because he was guilty or instigator of insurrection, but because some of his judges said that in the general course of his life he had been a sad dog, and perhaps it was necessary to save appearances."24 This incident is suggestive of the tensions and fears created in a city with a population half slave. Despite

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup>William Bull to Hillsborough, November 30, 1770, SCBPRO 32:382, Committee Report on Boundary Between South and North Carolina, inclosure, Board of Trade Journal, SCBPRO 32:143.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>See here especially Wood, <u>Black Majority</u>, 308-326, and Knepper, "Political Structure of Colonial South Carolina," 36-38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup>William Bull to Board of Trade, December 17, 1765, January 25, 1766, SCBPRO 30:300-301, 31:18-21; Bull Jr., <u>Oligarchs in Colonial and Revolutionary Charleston</u>, 122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, January 29, 1766, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u>, 5:53-54.

white assertions that mutual bonds of affection existed between happy slaves and kindly masters, the slightest rumors of unrest could set off widespread panic.

Timothy Ford described an incident which gives great insight into the intimate links between slavery and status in South Carolina. While returning to town after visiting a local plantation, Ford and his friends stopped for a picnic beside the road. At some distance off, a man appeared on horseback, and the locals all commented upon the fine cut of his clothes and his expert horsemanship. "As we were all surveying and querying who he should be," Ford wrote, "one of the company finished the enquiry by saying 'he cannot be a gentleman for he is riding without servants." Soon, however, two slaves on horseback emerged from the woods, and the stranger "regained his lost honours, and it was agreed on all sides that he is a gentleman."75 The New Jersey native found the whole scene baffling. Ford simply could not fathom how ownership of other human beings could define rank and status in society. A later visitor echoed similar thoughts: "It is strange that men should value themselves most upon what they ought to be most ashamed of."76 Slaves did not simply represent another form of labor. Their overwhelming presence in both the city and countryside was inextricably linked with the way white South Carolinians created their own identity. In the years to come whites would view any challenge to the institution, from any quarter whatsoever, as a direct threat to the social and economic system that formed the very heart of their society.

<sup>75</sup>Barnwell, "Diary of Timothy Ford," 189-190.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>H. Roy Merrens, "A View of Coastal South Carolina in 1778: The Journal of Ebenezer Hazard," South Carolina Historical Magazine 73 (October 1972): 190.

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Charleston's reaction to the Stamp Act, though labeled "cautious" and "conservative" by some historians, certainly frightened contemporary royal officials and the city's elite and upset traditional notions of political participation, deference, and social order.77 "Some negroes mimicked their betters in crying out 'liberty," while angry crowds threatened to pull down the homes of royal officials and forced their way into Henry Laurens' home to search for stamped papers.78 The "official" elite reaction was, of course, much more subdued. Merchants, lawyers, and planters disagreed among themselves over a proper response to the Stamp Act, particularly after violence followed resistance in Northern ports.79 Henry Laurens thought such uprisings disgraceful and urged Carolina authorities to prevent any "apings and mockery of those infamous inglorious feats." While Laurens did not support the Stamp Act, he felt that only a decent, respectful representation would bring about redress. "The Act must be executed and indeed a suspension of it while it is in force would prove our ruin and destruction." he cautioned. Conversely, attorney Richard Hutson blasted Charlestonians as indifferent while applauding the "laudable example of the northern provinces in endeavoring to repel

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>See in particular Raymond G. Starr, "The Conservative Revolution: South Carolina Public Affairs, 1775-1790," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1964, and Maurice Crouse, "Cautious Rebellion: South Carolina's Opposition to the Stamp Act," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 73 (April 1972): 59-71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, January 29, 1766, <u>Laurens Papers</u>, 5:53-54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>See Nash, <u>Urban Crucible</u>, 184-199; Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, <u>The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution</u>, New rev. ed., (London: Collier Books, 1962), 187-204.

the manifest encroachments on their liberty.\*\*\*n In July the Commons House responded favorably to Massachusetts' invitation to send representatives to a Stamp Act Congress in New York the following October. The assembly elected Thomas Lynch, Christopher Gadsden, and John Rutledge, all established members of Charleston's elite. Rutledge practiced law in Charleston and invested heavily in land, obtaining over 30,000 acres by 1775. Lynch owned three plantations and a townhouse in Charleston and invested as purt-owner of three trading vessels. Gadsden, of course, was one of the city's most successful merchant-planters.\*\*I

Meanwhile, as the Stamp Act Congress deliberated in New York, the stamped paper arrived in Charleston on Friday, October 18, 1765, with the act set to take effect on November 1. Local Sons of Liberty, comprised primarily of artisans and mechanics, moved swiftly to resist British policy. The following morning two effigies of a stamp collector appeared hanging from a twenty-foot gallows at the corner of Broad and Church streets, near Dillon's Tavern, in the center of town. Onlookers passed by all day to see the figures with "LiBERTY and no STAMP ACT" printed on them, while the muffled bells of St. Michael's tolled mournfully. That same evening Stamp Act protesters cut the figures down, placed them in a wagon, and moved down Bay Street toward Tradd Street

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup>Henry Laurens to Joseph Brown, October 11, 1765, <u>Laurens Papers</u>, 5:25; Richard Hutson to Joel Benedict, October 30, 1765, Richard Hutson Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston. Hutson was the first intendant (mayor) of incorporated Charleston in 1783.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>South Carolina Gazette, August 10, 1765; David Duncan Wallace, South Carolina: A stort History. 1520-1948 (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1961), 231; Edgar and Bailey, Biographical Directory. 2:259-260, 420-421, 577-578.

and the home of stamp inspector George Saxby, followed by a crowd estimated at two thousand. Cooler heads barely restrained the crowd from demolishing the house, and after searching the grounds and breaking the windows the procession moved on to the City Green. There the protesters set the effigies on fire and solemnly buried "American Liberty" in a mock funeral as the flames rose into the night sky, 12

Five days later, on Wednesday, October 23, rumors circulated that the stamps had been brought into town and placed in Henry Laurens' home in Ansonborough, a suburb just north of Charleston. Daurens had opposed earlier street demonstrations, and that evening at midnight a crowd of protesters awakened Laurens by pounding violently on his front door. The startled merchant assured the crowd that he had no stamped paper, and Laurens, as a member of the gentry, expected to be taken at his word. Instead, the crowd

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup>Wallace, South Carolina, 231; South Carolina Gazette, October 31, 1765. Similar protests had taken place previously in Boston on August 14, and in Newport on August 27-29, 1765. See Peter D. G. Thomas, "The Stamp Act Crisis and Its Repercussions, Including the Ouartering Act Controversy," in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds., The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 117. These Stamp Act demonstrations of street theater and ritual protest were played out repeatedly in colonial capitals and have recently been called by David Waldstreicher "the first and most important example of celebration and mourning as loyal protest." Such protests were performed in the name of English tradition, and its guardian. the king. "With the king on their side, the lower classes could take the rhetorical high ground, even against the king's men." Only later, after the Declaration of Independence and the rejection of England, were colonial grievances thrust upon the King himself. David Waldstreicher, "Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism," Journal of American History 82 (June 1995): 43, 47. See also David Waldstreicher, "The Making of American Nationalism: Celebrations and Political Culture, 1776-1820." Ph.D. dissertation., Yale University. 1994.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup>Laurens' home was on the corner of what is now Laurens Street and East Bay. It was destroyed in 1916.

demanded entrance to his house; Laurens, fearing for his and his pregnant wife's safety. obeyed. After the crowd had searched the house in vain, the insurgents remained in Laurens's front parlor and demanded that he swear that he did not know the location of the stamps. When Laurens refused the crowd threatened him with violence. The standoff continued for over an hour before the dissidents finally gave up and left. As they did, "they praised me highly and insisted upon giving me three cheers and then retired with God bless your honor, Good night Colonel, We hope the poor lady will do well."84 During the ordeal Laurens recognized several of his accusers despite their disguises, and he called many of them by name. But despite words of bravery, the intrusion left Laurens shaken and stunned.85 Such an overt and direct threat to private property, social order, and political deference could not go unchallenged and Laurens complained directly to the lieutenant governor. Bull responded by calling a Council meeting, advising captains in port to keep their sailors aboard ship at night and announced to the public that he had lodged the stamped papers in Fort Johnson in Charleston Harbor. Bull privately fumed that "the artifices of some busy spirits" had poisoned "the minds of men with the principles imbibed and propagated from Boston and Rhode Island."66

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Henry Laurens to Joseph Brown, October 28, 1765, <u>Laurens Papers</u>, 5:29-32; <u>South Carolina Gazette</u>, October 31, 1765.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>Ten years later, when James Laurens, the child his wife was carrying that night, died after an accident in London, Laurens told his son John that "he was marked for misfortune before his birth." Henry to John Laurens, January 4, 1776, <u>Laurens Papers</u>. 10:617.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup>Godbold and Woody, Gadsden and the American Revolution, 58.

The following Monday Bull and other elite leaders witnessed more street theater. 
Stamp inspector George Saxby and stamp distributor Caleb Lloyd, having spent two days 
virtually imprisoned in the fort, came up to town to face a multitude of protesters 
threatening to tear them to pieces. The trembling pair pleaded that they would do nothing 
until Parliament had addressed colonial grievances, and the assembled throng roared its 
approval. The harbor rang with cheers, clanging bells, and cannon fire, and the crowd 
escorted the stamp officials first to Dillon's Tavern and later to their own homes. Saxby 
and Lloyd meekly explained to London that their lives and property had been repeatedly 
threatened, and they had acted only to prevent "murder and the destruction of the town."

Opposition to the Stump Act eventually closed down the South's busiest port. 
Trading ame to a halt, and as crops went unsold, money grew scarce and debts went 
unpaid. Though ships kept arriving they could not leave, and more and more sailors 
crowded into town. Charleston faced an explosive situation, and merchants pleaded with 
their London agents to lobby for repeal. Lt. Governor Bull, at the center of the storm, 
received enormous pressure from various groups to open the port without stumped paper, 
as Virginia and other colonies had done. Eventually Bull acquiesced. He simply declared 
stumped paper unavailable, opened the port, and tensions gradually essed.<sup>31</sup> On May 3, 
1766, unofficial news arrived that American resolve had been rewarded and that 
Parliament had repealed the act. Christopher Gadsden nearly fainted when he heard the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup>South Carolina Gazette, October 31, 1765; George Saxby and Caleb Lloyd to William Bull, October 29, 1765, SCBPRO 30:279-280; Morgan and Morgan, <u>Stamp Act</u> <u>Crisis</u>, 202.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>See Bull Jr., Oligarchs in Colonial and Revolutionary Charleston, 108-135.

report, and according to one witness "joy, jollity and mirth" reigned throughout the port. 
Official confirmation coincided with the traditional celebration of the king's birthday in 
June.<sup>19</sup> Bells rang throughout the city while ships in the harbor displayed their colors and 
fired cannon. The city's militia regiment, artillery company, and a new company of light 
infantry all assembled on the parade ground for review by Lt. Governor Bull. Later that 
evening, Bull hosted a dinner at Dillon's Tavern, attended by both houses of the 
legislature, local clergy, and all civil and military officers. Fireworks ended the festive 
day, and royal officials could rest assured that "the inhabitants of this province are a loyal 
and a grateful ecoole."<sup>60</sup>

The Stamp Act crisis had passed, but it exposed dangerous fault lines in the city's social and political facade. From the early 1750s through the early 1770s, Charleston's population doubled, with poor white inhabitants increasing at the fastest rate. The Stamp Act crisis simply accelerated existing social trends. The collapse of business swelled the ranks of the poor, and made a bad situation even worse. Institutions designed for poor relief, insufficient before the crisis, had been completely overwhelmed by December 1766. Runaway slaves, disorderly sailors, and the poor all crowded into the workhouse.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Robert Raper to Greenwood and Higginson, London, October 28, 1765, and Raper to John Colleton, November 8, 1765, Robert Raper Letterhook, South Curolina Historical Society, William Bull to Henry Seymour Conway, February 6, 1766, SCBPRO 31:22-26, Crouse, "Cauttoso Rebellion," 68; Peter Manigualit to Thomas Gadsdem, My 4, 1766.
Peter Maniguatt Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society, South Carolina Gazette, June 9, 1766.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>South Carolina Gazette, June 8, 1765; Peter Manigault to Charles Garth, July 4, 1766, Peter Manigault Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society. Garth was South Carolina's agent in London.

As poor tax rates increased, city fathers desperately sought ways to control a population that appeared to be growing dangerously out of control. 91

The Stamp Act crisis also gave vent to backcountry grievances against lowcountry arrogance and Charleston hegemony. South Carolina's backcountry, despite a growing population, elected only four of forty-eight assemblymen in the Commons House. Charleston alone had six representatives. The backcountry also lacked efficient and adequate law enforcement and educational institutions. Charleston leaders and lowcountry legislators in the assembly acknowledged the lack of courts, jails, sheriffs, and schools, but resisted spending their tax money on backcountry improvements. Hence, when coastal leaders denounced the Stamp Act as British "oppression," the backcountry exploded in anger. Charles Woodmason, an upcountry clergyman and popular spokesman, sneered that "while these provincials were roaring out against the Stamp Act and impositions, they were rioting in Luxury and Extravagance." Woodmason ridiculed the hypocrisy of "men who bounce and make such noise about Liberty! Liberty! Freedom! Property! Rights! Privileges! while they ride, oppress, distress and keep under the lowest subjection half of the inhabitants."92 For those who cared to see them, the Stamp Act crisis exposed the first signs of conflicts that would rage on for years.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup>Minutes of Vestry Meeting, December 7, 1766, St. Philip's Records, South Caroliniana Library; Easterby, "Public Poor Relief in Colonial Charleston," 83-86; Fraser, "City Elite, 'Disorder,' and the Poor Children of Pre-Revolutionary Charleston," 167-168.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup>Robert H. Woody, "Christopher Gadsden and the Stamp Act," <u>Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association</u>, 1937, 9.

The American Revolution presented both enormous challenges and unprecedented opportunities for all Charlestonians. As members of the city's elite gathered in Dillon's Tavern to celebrate the King's birthday and the repeal of the Stamp Act on that summer evening in 1766, few could have imagined that the Stamp Act crisis had thrust all ranks of Charleston society upon the brink of enormous changes. Yet, as Gordon S. Wood has recently written, when eighteenth-century Americans set out to change their governments, they changed their society as well.93 Once down the road of rebellion, the elite found to their horror that everything that gave their world stability and identity had come under assault. The city's plain mechanics and industrial artisans may have worked with their hands rather than their minds, but during the coming years they would take to the streets and raise their voices in protest against British mercantilism, elite economic policy, and time-honored notions of aristocratic dominance. Ultimately they rejected deferential politics altogether and embraced political equality and self-interested democracy. Religious dissenters attacked the established church. Backcountrymen, not content to simply condemn lowcountry hypocrisy, would demand a more egalitarian government and the removal of the capital to a centralized, "plebeian," location. Finally, and perhaps most ominously, a chorus of rising voices from both within and without the region challenged white South Carolinians' right to own other human beings. The Revolution in Charleston was not "cautious" or "conservative." In fact, it forever altered not only the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup>Gordon S. Wood, <u>The Radicalism of the American Revolution</u> (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 5.

relationships that bound Carolinians together, but also the city's position of unchallenged dominance in the colony and region.

TABLE 1-1 Population of American Cities, 1760-1810

New York         18,000         25,000         33,131           Boston         15,631         16,000         18,034           Charleston         8,598         12,000         16,352           Baltimore         5,934         13,503	38 24,937 34,32 59 20,473 24,71	22
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Sources: Carl Bridenbaugh, <u>Urban Life in America</u>, <u>1743-1776</u>, 216-217; Philip D. Morgan, "Black Life in Eighteenth-Century Charleston," <u>Perspectives in American History New Series</u> (1948): 188; Evertel S. Lee and Michael Lalli, "Population," in David T. Glichrist, ed., <u>The Growth of Seaport Cities</u>, 34-35; First, Second, and Third Federal Population Censuses.

TABLE 1-2

Number and Tonnage of Ships Outward and Inward Bound, For Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, 1768-1772

	New 101	к, гипацетрита	, and Charlesto	n, 1768-1772	
		Outwo	ard Bound		
	1768	1769	1770	1771	1772
Boston New York Philadelphia Charleston	612 33,695 480 23,566 641 36,944 429 31,551	828   37,045 787   26,859 678   40,871 433   31,147	800 36,965 612 26,653 769 47,292 451 29,976	794   38,995 524   25,433 741   43,029 487   31,031	845   42,506 700   28,574 759   44,822 485   31,548
		Inwai	rd Bound		
	1768	1769	1770	1771	1772
Boston New York Philadelphia Charleston	549 31,983 462 21,847 528 34,970 448 34,449	879   40,483 725   26,650 698   42,333 433   29,096	819 38,360 600 25,539 750 47,489 455 27,554	821   39,420 557   25,042 719   41,740 489   31,592	852   43,633 710   28,861 730   42,300 452   29,933

Source: Bureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970</u>, 2 vols., 2:1180-1181.

TABLE 1-3 Rice Exported From Charleston, 1765-1789 (barrels)

	Barrels	Pounds	% Total Rice Exports
1765	107,292	65,710,575	86%
1766	74,031	48,396,600	80%
1767	104,125	63,465,150	86%
1768	125,538	77,284,200	85%
1769	115,582	73,078,950	83%
1770	131,805	83,708,625	83%
1771	125,151	81,755,100	80%
1772	104,821	69,218,625	80%
1773	126,940	81,476,325	82%
1774	118,482	76,265,700	82%
1783	24,255	12,733,875	N/A
1784	61,974	32,536,350	N/A
1785	63,732	33,459,300	N/A
1786	66,557	34,942,425	N/A
1787	65,195	34,227,375	N/A
1788	82,400	43,260,000	N/A
1789	100,000	52,500,000	N/A

Source: Bureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970</u>, 2 vols., 2:1192.

Note: Number of pounds per barrel varied from year to year, but from 1765-1774 averaged 525 pounds. The pounds for 1783-1789 are not provided by the Bureau of the Census, but have been calculated using the average for 1765-1774.

TABLE 1-4 Indigo Exported From South Carolina, 1765-1788 (Ibs.)

1765	335,800
1766	491,800
1767	N/A
1768	498,000
1769	402,700
1770	550,800
1771	434,200
1772	746,700
1773	720,600
1774	747,200
1775	1,122,200
1783	289,500
1784	713,900
1785	626,200
1786	757,100
1787	974,100
1788	833,500

225.000

1700

Source: Bureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970</u>, 2 vols., 2:1189.

Note: Between 1768-1773, Charleston exported 92.2 percent of all indigo exported from South Carolina. The totals for 1783-1788 are for Charleston only.

TABLE 1-5 Black Population of North American Cities, 1760s-1810

	Pre-Rev.	1790	1800	1810
Philadelphia	872 (1775)	2,078	6,434	9,678
New York	3,137 (1771)	3,470	6,367	9,823
Boston	811 (1765)	766	1,174	1,484
Charleston	5,831 (1770)	8,270	10,843	13,143

Sources: Gary B. Nash, "Forging Freedom: The Emancipation Experience in the Northern Seport (rifes, 1775-1820), in In Berlin and Ronald Hoffmare, set, Signary, and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, 5; William Bull to Hillschorough, November 30, 1770, in Transcripts of Records in the British Public Record Office, 22-387-388, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia; First, Second, and Third Federal Population Censuses.

TABLE 1-6 Population of Charleston, 1760-1810

17700	White	Black	Total
1760	4,121 (48%)	4,474 (52%)	8,598
1770	5,030 (46%)	5,831 (54%)	10.861
1790	8,089 (49%)	8,270 (51%)	16,359
1800	9,630 (47%)	10,843 (53%)	20,473
1810	11,568 (47%)	13,143 (53%)	24,711

Sources: Philip D. Morgan, "Black Life in Eighteenth-Century Charleston," <u>Perspectives in American History</u> New Series 1 (1984): 188; First, Second, and Third Federal Population Censuses

TABLE 1-7
Population of Lowcountry South Carolina, 1775-1810

	White	Black	Total
1775	14,302 (16%)	72,743 (84%)	87,045
1790	28,644 (27%)	79,216 (73%)	107,860
1800	33,863 (26%)	98,800 (74%)	132,663
1810	38,061 (25%)	113,147 (75%)	151,208

Sources: Stella H. Sutherland, <u>Population Distribution in Colonial America</u> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 240; First, Second, and Third Federal Population Censuses.

Note: The Lowcountry consists in 1790 of Charleston District, Beaufort District, and Georgetown District, for 1800 also Colleton District, Marion District, for 1810 also Horry District, Williamsburg District.

TABLE 1-8 Slaves Imported Into Charleston, 1765-1775

	Slaves	Cargoes
1765	6,520	106
1769	4,652	67
1770	1,596	19
1771	2,035	77
1772	4,740	90
1773	7,845	97
1774	4,592	87
Total	31,980	543

Source: Bureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970</u>, 2 vols., 2:1173-1174.

Note: During 1766-1768 South Carolina prohibited the external slave trade. A total of 9 slaves and 5 cargoes entered the port during those years.

## CHAPTER TWO "THE MANY-HEADED POWER OF THE PEOPLE": METAMORPHOSIS, 1766-1775

"Excuse me for seeming to compare you to unbroke asses, upon whose backs it is extremely difficult to lay the first sack. Remember now or never, more sacks, more sacks are coming, if once you receive this."

"Home Spun Free-Man," 1766

"The present struggle will either insure happiness and freedom or miserable slavery to this continent. Our all is at stake, and upon the behavior of this day hangs the fate of future generations."

"Vox Populi," 1774

"You-think the people in England are acting madly, I am sure we may safely compare notes with them in this country. I am ready to cry out, a pox on both their houses, we are all mad, all wrong."

Henry Laurens, 1775

Between 1766 and 1775 a series of overlapping crises propelled Charleston

toward social, political, and economic revolution and armed rebellion against the Crown.

If South Carolina's colonial elite prided themselves on "the harmony we were famous

for,"1 the events of the late 1760s and early 1770s must have seemed like a nightmare.

The debate over the proper response to British policy shattered the cohesion of

See Robert M. Weir, "The Harmony We Were Famous For? An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," in Stanley N. Katz and John M. Murrin, eds., Colonial Americae Essers in Politics and Social Development (New York: Afferd A. Knopf, 1983, 421-446. (Originally published in William and Mary Ouarterly 26 (October 1969; 437-501.)

Charlesson's traditional leaders and turned resistunce into revolution as the city's middling ranks seized the opportunity to make unprecedented challenges to elite authority. Charlesson's artisans, like their counterparts in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, asserted their economic self-interest and adamantly supported non-importation in defiance of conservative merchants. As the epicenter of resistance in South Carolina, Charlesson's urban milieu accelerated the transition from deferential elite politics to self-interested democracy. The recognition of self-interest in American politics emerged as one of the most radical political innovations of the American Revolution, for it challenged traditional notions about communalism, political deference, and economic self-interest.<sup>2</sup>

This interpretation is supported by most of the recent scholarship on the Revolution in the urban North but contradicts the prevailing interpretations of the Revolution in South Carolina. Gary B. Nash found that in the urban North the Revolution accelerated existing demographic and economic trends and turned resistance into a "dual revolution," replacing vertical with horizontal divisions. Similarly, Charles F. Olton argues that Philadelphia's artisans exchanged "shy deference" for an increasingly active role in city politics after 1765. Artisans protected their economic self-interest by actively supporting non-importation of British goods, and merchant intransigence led them to organize in associations to air their political and economic grievances. They

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Gordon S. Wood, <u>The Radicalism of the American Revolution</u> (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 245-247, 252-259.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Gary B. Nash, <u>The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution</u> Abr. ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

sought not social revolution but political inclusiveness, which they had accomplished, he wrote, by 1777. This growing artisan assertiveness, Olton argued, emerged as "one of the most striking events in the history of Philadelphia in the eighteenth century." Edward Countryman uncovered analogous behavior among artisans in Revolutionary New York, who took to the streets to assert their demands and "stretched the fabric of New York until it rent even while they helped to do the same thing to the British empire." The Revolution brought great changes to the city, and Countryman finds that by 1790 New York society had been transformed. Charles G. Steffen and Dirk Hoerder found that artisan agitation in Baltimore and Boston produced similar results in those cities. Conversely, Mary Catherine Ferrari, a student of Southern urban artisans, asserts that during the non-importation movement of the late 1760s Charleston's artisans "neither challenged the traditional ruling powers nor did they attain cohesion among themselves."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Charles F. Olton, <u>Artisans For Independence: Philadelphia Mechanics and the American Revolution</u> (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1975), 33-34, 39-40, 52, 54, 80.

Februard Countryman, A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Societies in New York, 176-1790 (Baltimore Mb). Dobas Hopkins University Press, 1981, 36-45, 59. See also Howard B. Rock, Artisans of the New Revolution: Including an Office York City in the Age of Jeffergon (New York: New York University Press, 1979). Rock found that the political gains that New York's artisans made in the Jeffersonian en had their roots in the Revolution.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Charles G. Steffen, <u>The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution</u>, <u>1763-1812</u> (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); <u>Dirk Hoerder, Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts</u>, <u>1765-1800</u> (New York: Academic Press, 1977).

Mary Catherine Ferrari, "Artisans of the South: A Comparative Study of Norfolk, Charleston, and Alexandria, 1763-1800." Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1992, 92.

Similarly, David Chesnutt argues that "by the end of 1769 all sides had been placated, [and] stability had been restored to assembly politics." Robert M. Weir believes that the non-importation movement altered elite conceptions of South Carolina's relationship with London but did not disrupt the ties between the city's various factions. Indeed, most historians of Revolutionary South Carolina concur in the notion of the Revolution as a conservative elite revolt that produced little social, political, or economic instability. According to Weir, Revolutionary changes proved to be "weak and enhemeral."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>David Chesnutt, "'Greedy Party Work': The South Carolina Election of 1768," in Patricia U. Bonomi, ed., <u>Party and Political Opposition in Revolutionary America</u> (Tarrytown NY: Sleepy Hollow Press, 1980), 86.

Robert M. Weir, Colonial South Carolina: A History (Millwood NY: KTO Press, 1983), 306, 342. Weir earlier wrote that "the political culture of the eighteenth century persisted into the nineteenth in South Carolina with relatively little modification." Weir. "The Harmony We Were Famous For," 444. Similarly, George Winston Lane Jr writes that "once lowcountry families caught their breaths after restoring plantations and businesses to order, they would have noticed remarkably little change from the war." Lane Jr., "The Middletons of Eighteenth-Century South Carolina: A Colonial Dynasty, 1678-1787," Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1990, 715. John C. Meleney argues that "neither in South Carolina nor elsewhere in Revolutionary America did the commitment to virtuous republicanism imply rejection of a hierarchical political structure in which men of demonstrated merit would hold the requisite authority to govern. With independence won, the patriot rebels in the lowcountry became, overnight, the metropolitan establishment responsible for the management of political affairs and the preservation of both liberty and order . . . the Revolution was not a great divide. Only the terms of reference changed, as one source of authority was lopped off and another substituted in its place." Meleney, The Public Life of Aedanus Burke: Revolutionary Republican in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press. 1989). 278, 281. Richard Brent Clow came to a similar conclusion in his biography of Edward Rutledge. See Clow, "Edward Rutledge of South Carolina. 1749-1800: Unproclaimed Statesman," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1976. especially 200. Eva B. Poythress maintains that throughout the conflict leadership remained firmly in the hands of traditional leaders. "The same men who opened the breach . . . continued in government through the war." Many members of the conservative elite such as Laurens, the Rutledges, the Pinckneys, and the Middletons "nurtured the Revolution in its earliest phases and saw it through to its conclusion. The

This chapter explores how the enormously disruptive events of 1766-1775
shattered the stable world of Charleston's elite and turned resistance into radical
revolution. By September 1775 the economic, political, and social stability of the
prospering, growing metropolis of 1765 had been replaced by "division, riot, anarchy, and
confusion." The Continental Association closed the harbor to both imports and exports.
With all commerce at a halt, courts closed, money grew scarce, and debts went unosid.

political elite was both supported and spurred to greater action by the mechanics of the city and the more liberal elements of the backcountry, but ultimate direction and authority lay always with the traditional leadership." Poythress, "Revolution By Committee: An Administrative History of the Extralegal Committees in South Carolina, 1774-1776," Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1975, 340-341. Gordon Roy Denboer asserts that "by early assuming leadership of the opposition to British policies in the early 1760s and continuing that opposition as each new crisis occurred up to mid-1776, the colony's political leaders greatly minimized the chances that they would be upset in an internal revolution." Denboer, "The Early Revolutionary Movement in South Carolina. 1773-1776," M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1969, 144. Marvin R. Zahniser wrote that "to a remarkable degree the low-country gentry retained control of the government in South Carolina after the Revolutionary War. In the political sphere, it sometimes seemed that the war had never taken place." Zahniser, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 101. Raymond Starr proposed that "because of the conservative leadership, the aim of the revolutionary movement was to protect the rights of British citizens and to prevent anarchy, not to establish a new social and political order," and that "the Revolution had freed South Carolina from British control within the state without producing an internal revolution." Starr, "The Conservative Revolution: South Carolina Public Affairs, 1775-1790," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1964, 285, 288. His findings agreed with George C. Rogers Jr., Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758-1812) (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1962), 36. Frederick P. Bowes argued that in 1776 the Charleston aristocracy "threw off the one remaining trammel to its power and stood supreme over the life and government of South Carolina." Bowes, The Culture of Early Charleston (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina, 1942), 115. Jerome J. Nadelhaft argued for a limited political revolution in South Carolina that brought increased representation to the backcountry and the rise of democratic rhetoric. The war "made necessary the enlistment of widespread support and gave new people experience and confidence." Nadelhaft, The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina (Orono Me: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1981), 105-124, 216

Armed men in rebellion to the Crown roamed the streets, non-legal bodies governed the city and province, and Charlestonians hastily constructed defenses against an imminent British Naval bombardment and invasion.<sup>10</sup> It all seemed unimaginable in 1766.

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The repeal of the Stamp Act set off wild celebrations in Charleston in the spring of 1766. When news of the repeal arrived on May 3, 1766, "joy, jollity, and mirth" reigned, according to Commons House speaker Peter Manigault." Charlestonians celebrated with banquets, bells, and fireworks. Almost no one noticed the Declaratory Act accompanying the good news, which asserted Partitament's right to legislate for the colonies "in all cases whatsoever." The Commons House of Assembly, certain that the repeal marked a great moment in South Carolina history, commissioned a statue of William Pitt, "the Great Commoner" who had championed American liberty, to be erected in the center of town at the intersection of Broad and Meeting stress." But even

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, June 10, 1775, in B.D. Bargur, ed., "Charles Town Loyalism in 175: The Secret Reports of Alexander Innes," Search Candina Historical Manazine 63 (1962) 134; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, Johy 2, 1775, "Letters from Henry Laurens to Hosen John A. 2006 (2016) Historical Manazine (2016) Manuary 1904): 12; Henry Laurens to Hosen John Laurens, September 18, 1775, in Philip M. Hamer et al., eds., The Pagers of Henry Laurens, 1400 to date (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968-), 10:396-397; South Carolina and American General Gazette, September 1, 1775.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Peter Manigault to Thomas Gadsden, May 14, 1766, Peter Manigault Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>The statue was raised on Thursday, July 5, 1770. See <u>South Carolina Gazette</u>. July 5, 1770, and D.E. Huger Smith, "Wilton's Statue of Pitt," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 15 (January 1914): 18-38. The statue's pedestal is now in Washington Park behind City Hall, and the statue itself, minus an arm, is now in the Charleston Museum.

the most ardent foes of the Stamp Act could not imagine how quickly these celebrations would fade into memory, to be overshadowed by the darker events of the next ten years.

The repeal of the Stamp Act had opened up the harbor, and the city bustled with activity after the long cessation of trade. The new royal governor, Lord Charles Greville Montagu, arrived in Charleston on June 11, 1766. 

He entered a flourishing, growing city, and despite the upheaval of the next decade, Charleston continued to expand as a regional center of trade and commerce. Nevertheless, the Southern metropolis did not lack significant social, political, and economic problems. The number of the city's poor rose alarmingly during the late 1760s, particularly as the Stamp Act crisis closed the harbor, and poor tax rates increased accordingly. 
Simultaneously, overzealous revenue officers began harassing Charleston merchants in an effort to enforce the letter as well as the spirit of the Navigation Laws. Royal customs officials seized several coasting schooners owned by Henry Laurens, and his subsequent legal troubles in the Court of Vice Admiralty exposed the problem of corruption in the colonial administration. 
In

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>South Carolina and American General Gazette, June 13, 1766.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>This problem is discussed in chapter one, but see also Barbarn L. Bellows, Benavolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Chapteston. 1670-1869 (Baton Rouge LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Walter J. Fraser F., "The City Elite, "Disorder," and the Poor Children of Pre-Revolutionary Charleston." South Carolina Historical Magazine 84 (July 1983): 167-179.

<sup>&</sup>quot;See David Duncan Wallace, The Life of Henry Laurens (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), 137-149, Warner Oland Moore Jr., "Henry Laurens: A Charlesson Mertal in the Eighteenth Century, 1374-1771," Ph.D. disseration, University of Alabama, 1974, 267-289, Robert M. Calboon and Robert M. Weir, "The Scandalous Hissory of Sir Egeron Leigh," William and Mary Cangerty 26 (January) 1996; 33-52, Weir, "A Most important Epocha." The Coming of the Revolution in South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Peters).

addition to social and economic problems, Charlestonians faced a storm of political protest from backcountrymen demanding adequate judicial and educational institutions, as well as more proportionate representation in the legislature. The populous region elected only four of the forty-eight members of the Commons House of Assembly and suffered from a lack of schools, jails, and law enforcement officials. The Assembly partially placated backcountry dissidents by passing the Circuit Court Act of July 1769, but only after the bloodshed and violence of the Regulator movement. If Meanwhile, the dispute over schools and especially backcountry representation remained contentious and divisive issues for several decades to come.

As one historian has noted, the Stamp Act crisis of 1765-1766 created "a political squall line that would eventually spawn larger storms.\*17 At the height of the furor in 1766, "Home Spun Free-Man" compared his fellow South Carolinians to "unbroke asses" and warned that "more sacks, more sacks are coming" if they did not resist ministerial

the Royal Navy, 1767," South Carolina Historical Magazine 93 (July/October 1992): 196-201. John Hancock had similar problems in Boston. See Oliver M. Dickerson, The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 231-250.

<sup>&</sup>quot;On the Regulator movement, see Richard Maxwell Brown, The South Carolina Regulators (Combinedpe MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Rachel N. Klein. Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backscountry, 1266-1888 (Chaple Hill. NC: University of North Carolina Pess, 1990), 47-77; Klein, "Ordering the Backcountry, The South Carolina Regulation," William and Marx Quantity is (1981), 664-680.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Robert M. Weir, "Liberty and Property, and No Stamps': South Carolina and the Stamp Act Crisis," Ph.D. dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1966, 354.

encroachments.18 Indeed. Charlestonians violently resisted implementation of the act as their counterparts did in the urban North. 19 Despite colonial resistance, or perhaps because of it, "more sacks" followed anyway. Parliament passed the Townshend Acts on June 29, 1767, taxing all glass, lead, paint, and tea imported into America effective November 20, 1767. The Ministry intended for the acts to raise £40,000 a year in the colonies, with the revenue earmarked for colonial defense and administration. American dissenters charged that Parliament in fact designed the acts to demonstrate its supremacy over colonial legislatures and to make royal officials financially independent of provincial legislatures. The news reached Charleston via Boston on August 21, 1767 20, In-November, word arrived that Boston had resolved not to import any taxable goods. On February 11, 1768, the Massachusetts House sent out a circular letter to the other provincial assemblies urging joint action in opposing the Townshend Acts. When Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard demanded that the House rescind the letter ninety-two members refused. Bernard retaliated by proroguing and then dissolving the House.21 Secretary of State Hillsborough, determined to prevent a continental

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, February 25, 1766.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>For the events of October 1765, see chapter one, and Weir, "Liberty and Property," 222-243.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Weir, <u>Colonial South Carolina</u>, 301-302; <u>South Carolina and American General Gazette</u>, August 21, 1767.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Edward McCrady, <u>The History of South Carolina Under the Royal Government</u> 1719-1776 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1899), 596-602.

Townshend Duties assembly analogous to the Stamp Act Congress, ordered colonial governors to prevent their respective legislatures from considering the letter.

The election of 1768 marked the first time Charleston's artisans participated in the political process. With the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly scheduled to meet in November 1768, Governor Montague called elections for October 4 and 5 Determined to make their voices heard in the debate over the Townshend Duties. Charleston's artisans held an unprecedented meeting at the Liberty Tree in Isaac Mazyck's pasture on Saturday, October 1, to choose a slate of candidates for the election.22 The artisans had been active in social organizations in Charleston but until the Stamp Act crisis had been relatively silent regarding politics.23 Opposition to the Townshend Duties presented Charleston craftsmen with the opportunity to strike a significant blow against the British mercantile system, which they believed prevented them from any chance of real prosperity. Charleston's craftsmen could not compete with their counterparts in Britain nor did the elite encourage them to do so. Charleston's merchants grew wealthy providing Carolina planters with the finest British manufactured goods, depriving Charleston artisans of both profits and customers. Artisanal dissent against the Townshend Acts therefore both promoted mechanic economic self-interest and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>As in chapter one, artisans are defined as laborers who performed skilled work with their hands, and the term is used interchangeably with "mechanic" and "craftsman" throughout this study. The term does not include unskilled laborers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>The artisans founded the Fellowship Society on April 4, 1762, as a benevolent society. See Fellowship Society Papers, microfilm, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. In the spring of 1768 the artisans sponsored a horse race and a cock fight. Ferrari, "Artisans of the South," 45.

denounced elite support for British manufacturing. The artisans adopted a pragmatic approach, however. Rather than supporting a cohort of artisans with little chance of winning the election, they wisely chose elite candidates perceived as being friendly to their cause. The meeting nominated five merchant-planters and one mechanic. Three of the candidates represented the top echelon of Charleston society; Christopher Gadsden. Benjamin Dart, and Thomas Smith of Broad Street, all successful merchant-planters. Gadsden had emerged as the leading spokesman for the city's tradesmen during the Stamp Act crisis. Dart had served as commissioner of the streets, workhouse, and markets, and in addition to his trading business owned a plantation on the Ashley River. Smith had retired from business when he inherited Broom Hall plantation in St. James Goose Creek Parish. The other three candidates, though successful, held lesser prestige. Slave trader Thomas Savage owned 200 acres in Berkeley County and a Charleston townhouse. Thomas Smith Sr. had been a Charleston merchant since the 1730s. Only Hopkin Price had been a mechanic. Price, a former tanner and cobbler, had acquired property in town and a small plantation on the Ashley River. He had served in the Commons House since 1760, representing various country parishes, but had never represented Charleston. The artisans considered but passed over attorney-planter Charles Pinckney, and merchantplanters Henry Laurens, John Lloyd, and John Ward.24

<sup>&</sup>quot;South Carolina Gazette, October 3, 1768; South: Carolina Gazette, October 3, 1768; Chesnutr, Tercely Party Work, "6-77; Walter B. Edgar et al., eds. Bioznablical Directory of the South Carolina House of Remesentatives, 5 vols. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina House of Remesentatives, 5 vols. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina House of Remesentatives, 5 vols. (Southed SC: University of South Carolina Pess.) 1947-1992, 2:1831-845, 540-541, 596-597, 641-643. David Duncan Wallace describes the artisan's meeting as a "primary." Wallace, Life of Henry Laugung, 1847.

Charleston voters elected Gadsden, Dart, and Savage, half of the artisans slate. Henry Laurens—one of the candidates rejected by the artisans—won election by a margin large enough to allow him to relinquish twenty of his votes to Charles Pinckney in order to prevent former artisan Hopkin Price from winning election. Laurens lampooned Gadsden's meeting with the artisans as a "grand barbacu given by a grand simpleton," and he senered at the idea of having to campaign for votes. "I walk on in the old road," be told Governor James Grant of East Florida, and he explained that he released votes to Charles Pinckney "to keep out a person who was thought unqualified to represent Charles Town," <sup>28</sup> Presumably former artisans could represent country parishes but not the grand metropolis.

The artisans erred in choosing merchants to represent their interests, however. Predictably, city merchants met the Massachusetts call for a colony-wide boycott of British goods with "silent neglect." The Stamp Act crisis had been disastrous for commerce, and merchants resisted cutting off all business with London. Indeed, a threeyear ban on slave importations would end in 1769, and Charleston traders anticipated a brisk business with planters eager to buy human cargo. 77 Most merchants agreed that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>South Carolina Gazette, October 10, 1768; Laurens to James Grant, October 1, December 22, 1768, Papers of Henry Laurens, 6:117-120, 231-234.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>William Bull to Hillsborough, October 18, 1768, in Transcripts of Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, 1663-1782, 36 volumes, 32:56-57, Records Deposited With the Secretary, Records of the Secretary of State, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia (hereafter cited as SCBPRO).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>See Henry Laurens to Ross and Mill, December 24, 1768, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u>. 6:240-241: "The planters are full of money, and their rice commands money wherefore 'tis probable that the sales of slaves will be very advantageous at this market.".

South Carolina should resist the Townshend Acts, but many felt that a closed port would be the least desirable option. Nevertheless, Lieutenant Governor William Bull reported to Secretary Hillsborough that many Charlestonians supported the "political principles now nrevailing in Boston." Even if Charleston's merchants did not personally favor nonimportation, clearly most of the colonies favored some form of resistance to the latest scheme of Parliamentary taxation. Members of the Commons House , however. disagreed over the proper response. Bull prorogued the Assembly until November 14. 1768, hoping that the absent Governor Montagu might return so that he could preside over the brewing controversy.28 When Montagu returned he warned the House-referring of course to the Massachusetts circular -- to ignore any letter it received which might have "the smallest tendency to sedition, or by promoting an unwarrantable combination to inflame the minds of the people." The Commons House, sensing an executive encroachment on its privileges, assured the Governor that it had received nothing of the kind, and all twenty-six members present promptly endorsed the Massachusetts letter. A furious Montagu immediately dissolved the Assembly, complaining to his superiors in London that all of his efforts to prevent the Commons from endorsing the letter had been in vain.29

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Bull to Hillsborough, October 18, October 23, 1768, SCBPRO 32:56-59.

November 24, 1768; South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, November 29, 1768; Lord Charles Montagu to Hillsborough, November 21, 1768, SCBPRO 32:61. The twenty-six members are listed in South Carolina and American General Gazette. November 25, 1768.

Though the elite in the Assembly might agree to endorse the Massachusetts circular, they could reach no consensus on non-importation. The issue divided merchants and planters and exposed lealousies and tensions between various ranks of Charleston society. By early 1769, a majority of planters and artisans favored non-importation. When the Assembly lifted a three-year ban on the foreign slave trade in January 1769, one nlanter urged city merchants to send the transports back to Britain. When thousands of slaves crowded London docks and threatened to overrun the city, he said, royal officials would have no choice but to grant American demands. In the meantime, artisans-joined by a few planters-aggressively encouraged their fellow citizens to forego the luxuries of a corrupt empire and purchase only home manufactures. By February their efforts had borne fruit as artisans and planters resolved to boycott most British goods and slaves and to begin manufacturing their own clothes. Many merchants simply ignored the informal resolves and continued doing business as usual. By summer angry planters threatened to boycott any trader who continued to import merchandise and slaves from Britain. In late June the planters formalized their earlier resolves, signing an agreement not to purchase "any manufactures of Great Britain" and at the urging of the artisans added that they would cease to purchase slaves after January 1, 1770.30 The debate over resistance to British policy divided the merchant-planter oligarchy, and artisans seized the opportunity to voice their political and economic demands. Planters wishing to protect the Commons

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, February 7, 1769; South Carolina Gazette, February 2, June 1, June 29, July 6, 1769.

House against the encroachments of Parliament and artisans eager to strike an economic blow against British competitors formed an uneasy and pragmatic alliance.

By July 1769 two equally disagreeable options confronted Charleston's merchants. They could continue to import and face the wrath of the community or cut off all trade and face disaster. Seeking a compromise, they proposed to postpone non-importation for one year, until January 1, 1771, to cancel all outstanding orders, and to ban all slave importations during 1770. The artisans howled in protest over the omission of encouraging home manufactures and promptly rejected the merchant's proposal. At this point one exasperated merchant complained publicly that the mercantile community's choice amounted to "sign or be ruined." He argued that the nearly self-sufficient planters and artisans actually stood to profit by non-importation. Planters could expect to profit when prices rose for existing slaves, staple crops could continue to be exported, and artisans could expect a booming business with British competition removed. Merchants did not mind sacrificing to attain common goals, he wrote, but no one could expect them to bear a greater burden than other groups.31 Finally, the various factions reached a compromise agreement on July 22, 1769, banning most imports of manufactured goods and slaves. Anyone failing to sign after one month faced public condemnation and boycott. When the merchants appointed a committee of thirteen to enforce the association, the planters and artisans did likewise, forming one General Committee of 39.32 The forging of a non-importation agreement had consumed over six months and had

<sup>31</sup> South Carolina Gazette, July 13, 1769.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Ibid., July 27, 1769.

seriously divided planters and merchants. But for the first time, Charleston's artisans had obtained a measure of political equality, though admittedly only in an extra-legal body. Nevertheless, it represented a significant step.

The non-importation movement in Charleston, and in the American colonies in general, obtained only moderate success. In October 1769 Peter Manigault reported that only thirty-one merchants had refused to sign the association, but many probably endorsed the agreement from fear of communal retaliation rather than conviction.33 The jealousies and tensions exposed during the debate over the terms of the agreement continued during the boycott itself. The existing evidence indicates that the committee randomly enforced the agreement, and Charlestonians made charges and countercharges in the local press that some merchants received preferential treatment. Many merchants continued to receive goods from Britain that had been ordered long before signing the agreement and thus saw no reason why they could not land and sell those goods. Disagreement erupted when the committee allowed some merchants, but not others, to do so. The committee did not allow Alexander Gillon, for instance, to sell wine ordered in May 1769 which did not arrive until January 1770.34 Likewise, the committee warned Charlestonians to boycott Ann and Benjamin Mathews and advertised them as violators of the agreement on May 31, 1770. Ann Mathews charged that the goods had been ordered before she had signed the agreement, but that John Edwards, a member of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Peter Manigault to Ralph Izard, October 4, 1769, Peter Manigault Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society; William Bull to Hillsborough, September 25, 1769, March 6, 1770, SCBPRO 32:103-104, 199-204.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>South Carolina Gazette, February 1, 1770.

General Committee, had received cargoes under the same conditions and had been allowed to sell them. Her pleas fell upon deaf ears, and Benjamin Mathews, facing economic disaster, begged the Committee and the community for forgiveness.<sup>35</sup>

Some members of the elite objected to the prominent role played by artisans and mechanics in enforcing the boycott. William Henry Drayton lamponed the notion that tradesmen could sit in judgment of their betters. Scion of a wealthy and prestligious Carolina family, Drayton attended Oxford and had been elected to the Commons House in 1765 at age twenty-three. M Unlike many of his contemporaries, he chose to defend the royal prerogative in the late 1760s. In September 1769 he lashed out at the General Committee for publishing his name as a non-subscriber by ridiculing the "proforum vulgus." Drayton maintained that he would never take orders from a mechanic, and he questioned why other members of the educated elite would willingly associate with "men who never were in a way to study, or to advise upon any points, but rules how to cut up a beast in the market to the best advantage, to cobble an old shoe in the neatest manner, or to build a necessary house." Though he respected artisans he thought that "nature never intended that such men should be profound politicians or able statesmen." My other intended that such men should be profound politicians or able statesmen."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>Ibid., June 7, October 4, 1770. See also Leila Sellers, <u>Charleston Business On The Eve of The American Revolution</u> (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), 203-220.

<sup>&</sup>quot;See J. Russell Snapp, "William Henry Drayton: The Making of A Conservative Revolutionary," <u>Journal of Southern History</u> 57 (November 1991): 637-658; William M. Dabney and Marion Drugan, <u>William Henry Drayton and The American Revolution</u> (Albuquerque NNt: University of New Mexico Press, 1962); Edgar, <u>Biographical</u> <u>Directory</u>, 2:207-210.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>South Carolina Gazette, September 21, 1769.

merchants and planters undoubtedly shared Drayton's views but for the sake of unanimity kept silent.

The "unlettered" and "uneducated" target of Drayton's diatribe responded with biting sarcasm. The artisans' rebuttal rejected deference with a vengeance. They begged forgiveness for using plain language, they wrote, "for it cannot be expected they should know how to convey their thoughts in the polite and courtly manner of such a well-bred gentleman." The proud craftsmen happily made their living by manual labor and considered themselves "the most useful people in the community." Every man could not expect to be so fortunate as to either marry wealth or to inherit it as Drayton had done. Certainly he had not earned his money himself, nor, they insisted, was he capable of doing so. The artisans argued that despite Drayton's education, he would be helpless if forced to earn bread, clothing, or shelter with his own hands. He might "hire himself as a packhorseman in the Indian trade, serve some mechanic as a labourer, or if he behaved himself well, he might drive a cart or dray about the streets of Charles Town." In short. the artisans argued that they represented an indispensable part of the community, as important in that sense as any man of inherited wealth, and stood equal to the planters' and merchants' with regard "to love for their country." Drayton nor any other member of the elite ever responded, but the exchange reveals the social and political tensions that the non-importation movement had brought to the surface. Undoubtedly other planters and merchants viewed the artisanal response with suspicion, and many must have

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., October 5, 1769.

wondered if perhaps something more important than political supremacy over Parliament was at stake.

Parliament repealed all of the Townshend Duties except the tax on tea on April 12, 1770, and unified American resolve began to crumble shortly thereafter. The merchants of Albany, New York, and Providence and Newport, Rhobe Island, abandoned non-importation in May. New York followed in July, Philadelphia in September, and finally Boston in October. Charlestonians reacted bitterfy to this "base desertion," and determined to continue rigid enforcement until all of the duties had been repealed." "At present we stand single in adhering to our resolutions," Henry Laurens wrote, "but I am afraid we shall not have virtue enough to continue much longer." Indeed, by December many Charlestonians realized that they could not stand alone, and a mass meeting presided over by Laurens on December 13, 1770, the community abandoned non-importation with the singular exception of tea. Many bitterly resented the Northern colonies, and some talked of banning all trade with them but in the end decided against harming Northern "landlords, farmers, and mechanics" because of Northern merchant greed.

The non-importation movement reduced Charleston's imports from Great Britain by 56 percent from 1769 to 1770, and importation of slaves alone fell by 65 percent. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>Peter Manigault to Daniel Blake, October 19, 1770, Peter Manigault Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society; South Carolina Gazette, October 9, 1770.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>Henry Laurens to Ross and Mill, October 31, 1770, Papers of Henry Laurens, 7:393-394.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>South Carolina Gazette, November 22, December 13, December 27, 1770.

British economy, however, could better withstand the loss of American trade in 1770 than it could during the Stamp Act crisis of 1765-1766.42 Parliament repealed the Acts largely because the taxes had failed to raise the desired revenue. There had been no Parliamentary recognition of American rights. In the aftermath of the boycott, Charleston planters and merchants resented their Northern urban counterparts and grew increasingly suspicious of each other. Some merchants and factors had faced financial ruin because planters exerted economic pressure by doing business with only those merchants who joined their cause. Simultaneously, many planters begrudged the merchant's singleminded devotion to economic self-preservation rather than protection of American rights. The political, social, and economic stability that had so long characterized Charleston's governing elite had shown distinct signs of splintering in the debate over how best to respond to the threat of British taxation. 43 When the elite rose to meet this challenge to their authority and divided over the proper response, the artisans seized the opportunity to make their own voices heard within the realm of urban political and economic life. These first tentative steps alarmed the traditional elite, opening a door that many feared would be impossible to close.

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The Wilkes Fund dispute began in the midst of the debate over the response to the Townshend Duties. Though the conflict did not involve all segments of Charleston

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Boston's imports fell by 48 percent, New York's by 85 percent, Philadelphia's by 70 percent over a two-year period. Sellers, <u>Charleston Business</u>, 217-218; Weir, <u>Colonial South Carolina</u>, 305.

<sup>43</sup>On political stability, see Weir, "The Harmony We Were Famous For."

society, it is significant because it kept members of the Charleston elite in the Commons House in confrontation with the Council, governor, and royal ministers throughout the early 1770s while events remained quiet in other colonies. In that sense it became a "bridge to Revolution," as Jack P. Greene described the conflict, between the events of the late 1760s and the tea controversy of the mid-1770s.44 As the Commons House quarreled over the most appropriate response to the Townshend Acts. Christopher Gadsden laid a request before the Assembly from the Society of Gentlemen Supporters of the Bill of Rights. The Society solicited funds from Americans to support British MP John Wilkes in his legal and political battles with the King and his ministers. The ministry had jailed Wilkes for contempt after lampooning George III in his newspaper. The North Briton. His constituents had promptly reelected him, but the ministry refused to allow him to sit.45 Many Americans believed Wilkes had waged a solitary battle in England analogous to the colonial struggle. He had thus become a symbol of persecuted political liberty and many considered him a hero. The Supporters of the Bill of Rights had requested funds from all of the colonial assemblies, but only South Carolina responded. On December 8, 1769, the Commons House appropriated £1,500 sterling to the Society "for assisting in the support of the just and constitutional rights of America."46

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>Jack P. Greene, "Bridge to Revolution: The Wilkes Fund Controversy in South Carolina, 1769-1775," <u>Journal of Southern History</u> 24 (February 1963): 19-52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>See George Rudé, <u>Wilkes and Liberty: A Political Study of 1763 to 1774</u> (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), especially 17-36.

<sup>&</sup>quot;South Carolina Gazette, December 8, 1769; South Carolina and American General Gazette, December 13, 1769; Weir, Colonial South Carolina, 305; McCrady, History of South Carolina, 1719-1776, 662.

Many members knew when they cast their vote that the measure would cause a firestorm of controversy in both London and Charleston, and it did. Lieutenant Governor Bull informed Secretary Hillsborough that he had been powerless to prevent the appropriation because of the "great civil indulgences granted by the crown to encourage adventurers to settle in America." In short, the colonial legislatures had grown quite powerful over the years at the expense of other royal officials. 47 The King and his ministers considered Wilkes a personal enemy, and George III viewed the South Carolina gift to his defense as highly insulting. Consequently, London sent an "Additional Instruction" to South Carolina in April 1770 forbidding the passage of any money bills without the consent of the royal governor and council.45 The instructions also demanded that the governor and council veto any tax bill that attempted to replace the £1,500 taken out of the Treasury for the original gift. Suddenly graver and more important issues were at stake than the token sum to a political dissenter. Henceforth, the Commons House of Assembly---the elected representatives of the people of South Carolina -- could not appropriate tax money without the consent of Crown-appointed placemen.

The dispute became known as the Wilkes Fund controversy and effectively put an end to royal government in South Carolina five years before it disappeared in any other colony. The Commons House refused to recognize the Additional Instruction and never

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Bull to Hillsborough, December 12, 1769, SCBPRO 32:133. On the expansion of colonial legislative power, see Jack P. Greene, The Ouset For Power. The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963) and M. Eugene Sirmans, Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763 (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1966).

<sup>48</sup> Board of Trade Instructions, April 3, 1770, SCBPRO 32:233-234.

passed a tax bill after 1769. The controversy revolved around two issues: the right of the people's representatives to draw on the Treasury without the consent of royal officials and the right of the crown-appointed Governor's Council to sit as an upper house of Assembly.49 In hindsight, many members of the Commons regretted the appropriation but refused to concede the principle at issue. Speaker Peter Manigault of the Commons House grew weary of the dispute, complaining that "I hate to hear any mention of the Bill of Rights and the money we threw away upon them. It was always against my opinion and has been attended with very disagreeable consequences. "50 Nevertheless, the Commons House would not back down. 51 By 1772, Governor Montagu had grown thoroughly disgusted with the now-familiar routine. He would call for elections, and the Commons would meet and pass a tax bill that included the £1,500. The Council would then veto the bill and the Commons would refuse to reconsider. At that point the governor would first prorogue and subsequently dissolve the Assembly, all without any public business having been completed. Finally, in the fall of 1772, Governor Montagu decided to call a meeting of the Assembly in Beaufort, seventy miles south of Charleston. He reasoned that the most obstinate members resided in Charleston and could not afford to be absent long from there. The remaining members, he hoped, would prove more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Denboer, "Early Revolutionary Movement in South Carolina," 2; William Bull to Hillsborough, September 8, 1770, SCBPRO 32:320; South Carolina Gazette, April 12, September 13, 1770, April 9, 1772; Weir, "A Most Important Epocha", 39-50; McCrady, History of South Carolina, 1719-1776, 683-704.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Manigault to Daniel Blake, October 19, 1770, Peter Manigault Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>51</sup>See Bull to Dartmouth, March 10, 1774, SCBPRO 34:15-19.

compliant with royal demands.<sup>52</sup> Montago also believed that by threatening to move the capital permanently to Beaufort he could frighten the Charleston members into giving up the point of dispute in the Wilkes Fund controversy in order to keep the capital in Charleston. Montago blundered badly on all counts. In provincial minds, the royal governor had issued a challenge to the colony's elite that they could not fail to meet.

The Assembly met in Beaufort on October 8, 1772, with thirty-seven of fortyeight members present, a record number for the first day. Stunned by the large attendance
and unsure of his next move, Montagu kept the members waiting for two days and then
prorogued them back to Charleston.<sup>23</sup> By now he had been warned by Secretary of State
Dartmouth that moving the legislature would be ill-advised and would only "increase that
ill humor which has already too unfortunately prevailed." When Montague informed
Dartmouth that he had in fact already called the Assembly to meet in Beaufort,
Dartmouth exploded, bitterly denouncing the Carolina governor for "throw[ing] new
difficulties in the way of an accommodation of the former subject of dispute." The
Commons House accused him of "a most unprecedented oppression and an unwarranted
abuse of the Royal Prerogative" and asked its agent in London to work toward Montagu's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Lord Charles Montagu to Hillsborough, July 27, September 24, 1772, SCBPRO 33:166-168, 173-180; South Carolina Gazette, September 3, 1772; Alan D. Watson, "The Beaufort Removal and the Revolutionary Impulse in South Carolina," South Carolina Historical Magazine 84 (July 1983): 121-135.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>South Carolina Gazette. October 15, 1772; South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal. October 13, 1772; Montagu to Hillsborough, October 20, 1772, SCBPRO 33:183.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>Dartmouth to Montagu, September 27, 1772, January 6, 1773, SCBPRO 33:181-182, 202-203.

removal. After several more skimnishes with the Commons and feeling besieged on all sides, Montagu departed for London in March 1773 and subsequently resigned.<sup>59</sup> The ministry eventually removed the Additional Instruction, but the Revolutionary events of 1774-1775 superseded the issue.

The Wilkes fund dispute and Montagu's attempt to move the capital fed the growing colonial fears of corrupt and conspiratorial royal officials. <sup>16</sup> The events combined to stoke the fires of elite resistance in a colony where the more radicalized elements of Charleston society had previously struggled against conservative complacency and where traditional leaders generally refused to act until compelled by the demands of the middling and lower ranks.

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Shortly after Montagu sailed for London, word arrived in Charleston that local merchants expected a shipment of tea that required payment of the dreaded tax in order to be landed. The Charlestonians once again divided over a proper course of action. One local newspaper counseled that to land the tea would be a tacit admission of Parliament's right to tax the colonies. Planter "Junius Brutus" warned of Parliament's sinister design to "raise a revenue out of your pockets, against your consent, and to render assemblies of

<sup>55</sup> South Carolina Gazette, November 2, 1772, January 7, March 15, 1773.

<sup>56</sup> The best articulation of elite paranoia remains Bernard Bailyn, <u>The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution</u> (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>For background on the colonial tea trade and the granting of a monopoly to the East India Company, see Benjamin Woods Labaree, <u>The Boston Tea Party</u> (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1964), 3-14, 58-79.

your representatives totally useless.\*\*18 Some called for united community opposition, while others thought the merchants should voluntarily refuse to accept shipment.\*9 Meanwhile, on Wednesday, December 1, 1773, the London sailed into port carrying 257 chests of tea consigned to merchant Roger Smith and the firm of Leger and Greenwood.\*0 Handbills appeared throughout Charleston the next day inviting Charlestonians \*without exception, particularly the landholders\* to assemble for a meeting at the Exchange the following afternoon.\*1

This meeting marked the beginning of Revolutionary government in Charleston and the first of the various extra-legal bodies that would govern the city, and by extension the province, for the remainder of the royal period.<sup>43</sup> According to the local press, "the principal planters and landholders' joined with leading artisans to demand that merchants stop importing tea.<sup>43</sup> Local merchants boycotted the meeting, no doubt anticipating the planter-artisan reaction. Not to be outflanked, the assembled planters and artisans

<sup>51</sup> South Carolina Gazette, November 29, 1773.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>Ibid., November 22, November 29, 1773.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>Ibid., December 6, 1773; <u>South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal</u>, December 7, 1773.

<sup>61</sup> South Carolina Gazette, December 6, 1773.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup>Poythress, "Revolution By Committee," 27. The Wilkes fund controversy had effectively paralyzed all legal government in the colony, creating a vacuum filled by Revolutionary committees.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, December 7, 1773; George C. Rogers Jr., Rogers, "The Charleston Tea Party: The Significance of December 3, 1773," South Carolina Historical Magazine 75 (July 1974): 153-168.

summoned Smith. Leger and Greenwood and informed them that landing the tea would be unacceptable. Instead, they should return the tea immediately to Britain. The merchants had little choice but to agree, and the assembled multitude responded with "reneated thanks and loud shouts of applause."64 The planters further proposed an economic boycott against any merchant who continued importing tea, and the meeting appointed a committee of five--three planters, one merchant, and one artisan--to gather merchant signatures on an agreement pledging non-importation of tea. 65 Despite the compliance of over fifty merchants by the following afternoon, at least one planter publicly voiced dissatisfaction that the merchants once again had to be coerced into action.66 The merchants, meanwhile, openly resented the strong-arm tactics of the mechanic-planter alliance. Consequently, Charleston's principal merchants gathered six days later and organized the Charleston Chamber of Commerce to protect their interests 67 The Chamber elected John Savage, president, Miles Brewton, vice-president, David Deas, treasurer, and John Hopton, secretary. Savage, Brewton, and Deas were prominent and wealthy slavetraders. Hopton had served as a former clerk of Henry Laurens and entered

<sup>64</sup> South Carolina Gazette, December 6, 1773.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>The committee consisted of planters Charles Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and Thomas Ferguson, merchant-planter Christopher Gaddsen, and artisan Daniel Cannon. Though a merchant, Gadsden did not represent the city's more conservative faction of merchants. The fact that a committee had to be appointed to go out and gather merchant signatures suggests that very few merchants attended the meeting.

<sup>66</sup> South Carolina Gazette, December 6, 1773.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Ibid., December 13, 1773; Poythress, "Revolution By Committee," 30.

into partnership with Robert Powell in 1771.61 The planters and artisans responded by holding separate meetings at Swallow's Tavern. The artisans, particularly upset over the Chamber of Commerce and merchant intransigence, openly talked of forming their own organization to oppose the Chamber. 60 At yet another general meeting on December 17, planters and artisans heatedly denounced the merchants who continued to import tea and again resolved to prevent the landing of the tea aboard the London. Beyond that, the three factions could not reach agreement on any general response.

In the meantime the deadline passed for paying the duty on the tea aboard the 
London. Early on the morning of Wednesday, December 22, Lieutenant Governor Bull 
ordered customs officials to unload the tea and secure it in the cellar beneath the 
Exchange. Well aware of the community's mood, dockworkers labored at a feverish 
pace. The tea had been safely deposited by the time most of the town awoke. Furious 
and embarrassed Charlestonians argued that ellie dissension had delayed cooperative 
action and allowed Bull to outflank the committee and land the tea. The New York Sons 
of Liberty expressed outrage that Charleston alone among the principal scaports permitted 
tea to be landed and described the event as "an evil hour for America." They complained 
that divisions between Charleston merchants and planters might possibly "delay the

<sup>\*</sup>See the letter of introduction Laurens wrote for Hopton: Laurens to Browne, Searle and Company, July 31, 1770, Papers of Henry Laurens, 7:313-314. Savage and Hopton became Loyalists during the Revolution. Edgar. Bjographical Directory, 2:95-97, 189-190, 594-596; N. Louise Bailey, ed., Bjographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate, 1726-1983, 3 vols. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Persa, 1986), 2:747-748.

<sup>69</sup> South Carolina Gazette, December 15, 1773; Poythress, "Revolution By Committee," 30.

repeal of the Revenue Act\* and cause further divisions in other colonies. Factional disagreement continued in Charleston, but Bull's actions spurred planters and mechanics to create an executive "General Committee" designed to coordinate and direct resistance to any further importation of tea. This "General Committee" could also call general meetings of the people. On June 3, 1774, the Committee received news of the Boston Port Bill. Britain had at last imposed an iron hand on the insubordinate colonies, and Bull hoped the measure "would have some happy effect towards composing the disturbances in this province." He had never been more mistaken. "2

The news galvanized Charleston's planters and artisans into action. They now made a conscious effort to broaden resistance from primarily local mass meetings to a gathering with colony-wide representation, hoping that the country representatives would counteract the conservative merchants of the city. Christopher Gadsden told Samuel Adams in Boston that "members of the trading part have separated themselves from the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup>South Carolina Gazette. December 27, 1773; South Carolina Gazette and Country Lournal, February 1, 1774. See also Bull to Dartmouth, December 24, 1773, SCBPSO, 33:350-354. The South Carolina Gazette reported that "where never was an instance here of so great a number of packages being taken out of any vessel, and thus disposed of in so short a time."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Poyntmess, "Revolution By Committee," 35; Wallace, Life of Henry Laurens, 201-202; Ferrali, "Artisans of the South," 65, South Carolina Gizette Extruordinary, June 3, 1774. Parliament passed the Boston Port Bill on March 31, 1774, the first of the Coercive Acts passed in reaction to the Boston Tee Party of December 16, 1773. I closed the port of Boston to all shipping or trade except that involving military supplies and certain cargos of flood and fuel. The bill also stationed customs officials in Saltern arther than Boston, and closed the port until Boston reimbursed the East India Company for the tea destroyed in the Tea Party. See Labore. Boston Tea Party, 184-195.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>Bull to Dartmouth, July 31, 1774, SCBPRO 34:177-178.

general interest and neglected our public meetings." After Boston proposed an American boycott of trade with Britain, Charleston's General Committee called for a provincial meeting of citizens for July 6, 1774. The urban planter-artisan alliance hoped to unite with country members in support of non-importation. Unyleiding Charleston merchants now ignored the General Meeting at their economic peril."

The General Meeting of July 1774 represented a turning point in the Revolutionary movement in Charleston. With the Commons House of Assembly effectively paralyzed by the Wilkes Fund controversy, the government of the city and colony shifted from legal to extra-legal bodies. Once firmly allied with the urban planters, many of the city's principal merchants-particularly those in the Chamber of Commerce—had by 1774 become a conservative faction of rear-guard defenders of the status quo. The city's artisans and mechanics repeatedly opposed the merchants y supporting measures, such as non-importation and home manufactures, designed to promote artisanal self-interest. In the process factional interests—borizontal loyalties—began to replace vertical ties as South Carolina's extra-legal governing bodies become more inclusive and less deferential. The more liberal planters—led by Gadsden, Arthur Middleton, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and William Henry Dmyton—joined the city's

<sup>&</sup>quot;Godsden to Samuel Adams, May 23, 1774, in Richard Walsh, ed., The Writings of Christopher Gadsden L746-1805 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 93. Godsden told Adams that news of the Boston Port Bill "has raised our utmost resemment and detestation and [I] hope will produce the desired effect of rousing us from our suprincers." Godsden to Adams, June 5, 1774, India, 94.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup>McCrady, History of South Carolina, 1719-1776, 733; South Carolina Gazette, June 20, 1774.

radical artisans.<sup>21</sup> After the General Meeting of July 1774, however, many of Charleston's elite who had previously resisted British policy aggressively became noticeably more moderate and conservative with the growth of extra-legal government and increased artisan and backcountry participation.<sup>26</sup>

The General Meeting gathered in Charleston for three tumultuous days in July 1774. Newspaper publisher Peter Timothy described it as "the largest body of the most respectable inhabitants that had ever been seen together upon any public occasion here."

Over one hundred members attended, and for the first time backcountry inhabitants participated in government in significant numbers. Nevertheless, because every member could vote, the Charleston factions could pack the meeting and carry any disputed point. The meeting focused primarily on three issues: implementing non-importation, electing five delegates to a Continental Congress to meet in Philadelphia in September, and the debate over the extent of the powers granted to those delegates." The artisans, of course, repeatedly elamored for immediate non-importation, with the merchants and the Chamber

<sup>7</sup>Drayton, who had attacked artisan participation in non-importation enforcement in 1769, had joined the Whig cause by 1774-1775. See Snapp, "William Henry Drayton"; Dabney and Dargan, William Henry Drayton and the American Revolution, 47-64.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hemy Laurens wrote that "all agreed in one point that America is unjustly treated by the Mother Country, but divided into parties and differing in sentiments upon the proper means for obtaining a redress of grievances." Laurens to William Manning, January 4, 1775; see also Laurens to Richard Orwald, January 4, 1775; Bears of Herny Laurens 101;192. See also Carl J. Vipperman, <u>The Rise of Rawlins Lowndes</u>, 172;1-1800 (Columbia SC: University of South Caroline Press, 1978), 175;194.

<sup>77</sup>South Carolina Gazette, July 11, 1774.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>Wallace, <u>Life of Henry Laurens</u>, 202; Rogers, "Charleston Tea Party," 165; McCrady, <u>History of South Carolina</u>, 1719-1776, 734-735.

of Commerce consistently opposed. On the first vote the assembly rejected both nonimportation and non-exportation (which the planters opposed), and the meeting agreed to allow Congress to formulate any policy in that area. Merchants and artisans now turned their focus upon electing congressional delegates favorably disposed to their respective positions on non-importation. The Chamber of Commerce naturally favored more conservative delegates who would onnose any schemes for non-importation. They nominated planters Henry Middleton and Rawlins Lowndes, attorneys John Rutledge and Charles Pinckney, and merchant and Chamber of Commerce officer Miles Brewton. The artisans, led by Christopher Gadsden, accepted Middleton and Rutledge, and also nominated Gadsden and two moderate planters, Thomas Lynch, and Edward Rutledge, 79 The artisans flexed their political muscle for the first time when voting began for congressional delegates. The merchants made a tactical blunder by marching their clerks in a body to vote for the conservative delegation. Infuriated artisans responded by turning out to vote in record numbers and succeeded in electing their chosen slate of delegates. The election represented a significant step in the process of artisanal rejection of elite deferential politics. Though artisans pragmatically nominated members of the moderate elite as their candidates, they clearly would no longer quietly acquiesce to such blatant political intimidation. Such altered artisanal behavior caused many of the Charleston elite to back away from aggressive resistance to British policy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup>South Carolina Gazette, July 11, 1774; Poythress, "Revolution By Committee," 47-53; McCrady, History of South Carolina 1719-1776, 741.

Finally, the General Meeting appointed a Committee of Ninety-nine—fifteen merchants and fifteen artisans representing Charleston, and sixty-nine planters to represent the countryside—to act as an executive body and committee of correspondence. A quorum of twenty-one members could transact business; thus, Charleston's delegates could heavily influence the Committee. On the last day of the meeting several of the merchants voluntarily committed to non-importation until Carolina's delegates returned from Congress.<sup>10</sup>

When the meeting adjourned on July 8, 1774, Charleston's traditional leaders must have contemplated the events of the preceding three days with a mixture of satisfaction and fear. Certainly conservatives might have been relieved that non-importation had been postponed, but the election for delegates to Congress must have frightened even the more moderate members. Never had the city's artisans so openly opposed elite wishes, and many of Charleston's traditional leaders must have recognized by mid-1774 that resistance had taken them down a dangerous and unsure path. In resisting British policy had they not unintentionally opened themselves up to internal revolution as well? The Rev. John Bullman of St. Michael's Church undoubtedly voiced elite fears by vehemently censuring artisan participation in government from the pulpit of his church. He lashed out at the mechanic "who cannot perhaps govern his own household or pay the debts of his own contracting," yet pressured to be "qualified to dictate how the state should be governed." "Every silly clown and illiterate mechanic," he sneered, should 'keep to his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal. July 12, 1774; South Carolina Gazette. July 11, 1774; Enclosure of Bull to Dartmouth, August 3, 1774, SCBPRO 34:194; Poythress, "Revolution By Committee," 52-53.

rank, and do his duty in his own station, without usurping undue authority over his neighbor.\*\*1 The artisans responded that Bullman's tirade represented "civil and ecclesiastical tyranny by denying the privilege of thinking and acting to the honest and industrious mechanic.\*\*2 The vestry reprimanded Bullman for "entering upon politics in the pulpit at this time." After he steadfastly refused to apologize a general meeting of parishioners condemned his conduct by a vote of 42-33, and the vestry fired Bullman. Nevertheless, seventy-four of his followers petitioned for his recall or at least another meeting. The Vestry refused. Though forced eventually to leave the province, Bullman had the support of many of his parishioners. Clearly many of the elite felt uncomfortable about the expanding artisanal role in the extra-legal government. \*\*O

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The South Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress returned from Philadelphia on Sunday, November 6, 1774, armed with the Continental Association. The agreement would ban British imports on December 1, 1774, and all exports excert

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup>Protestant Episcopal Church, St. Michael's, Charleston, Records, 1759-1824, WPA transcripts, 97-99, South Caroliniana Library, copied from the original in the possession of St. Michael's Church, Charleston.

<sup>82</sup> South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, August 16, 1774.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>The vestrymen were planter-lawyers James Parson and Thomas Heyward, and merchants IF definmed Head, Peter Leger (of the tea-importing firm of Leger and Greenwood), Edward Blake, George Abbot Hall, and Robert William Powell. Only Head and Powell became Loyalists. <u>Biographical Directors of the South Carolina House</u>. 223-2325, 209-93, 370-72, 296-298, 323-226, 292-340, 582.

rice on September 1, 1775. "The agreement represented weeks of compromise and delicate negotiation in Congress, but it received only a hakewarm reception in Charleston and served to further divide political factions. Furious indigo planters blasted the exception for exporting rice as both a blatant attempt to show economic favoritism and an emburrassment to South Carolina. Charleston merchants, meanwhile, gloomily predicted economic disaster with the prospect of another non-importation movement. Merchant Levinus Clarkson voiced the concerns of the mercantile community when he complained that the Association "has effectually blasted my prospects for the ensuing year." If non-importation closed the slave trade, he moaned, he only recourse would be to return to his native New York, "for this country will not do to live in for a fair subsistence."

With the planters divided in their support for the agreement and the merchants opposed, the General Committee called for province-wide elections for a new Provincial Congress to meet at the Exchange in Charleston on Wednesday, January 11, 1775. The

<sup>&</sup>quot;South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, November 8, 1774; South Carolina Gazette, November 21, 1774. The text of the Continental Association is in William Edwin Hemphill, ed., Extracts From the Journals of the Provincial Congresses of South Carolina, 1772-1775. In Set taste Records of South Carolina Columbia Sc. South Carolina Archives Department, 1960), 15-19, and in Yearbook, City of Charleston, 1883 (Charleston Sc. News and Courier Book Presses, 1883), 316-422. See also Christopher Gould, 'The South Carolina and Continental Associations: Prelade to Revolution, "South Carolina Historical Magazine 87 (Perhaury 1986): 30-48. For South Carolina Hospital Magazine 87 (Perhaury 1986): 30-48. For South Carolina Historical Magazine 97 (Arcober 1993): 323-251, and Frank W. Ryan Jr., "The Role of South Carolina in the First Continental Congress, "South Carolina in the First Continental Congress," South Carolina Historical Magazine 96 (1995): 147-153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup>Levinus Clarkson to David Van Horne, January 2, 1775, in William Bell Clark, ed., Naval Documents of the American Revolution, 10 vols. to date (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1964-), 1:49.

Provincial Congress would consider the Association and elect delegates to a second Continental Congress to meet the following May. Henry Laurens fretted that the necessity of more inclusive politics meant that the "reins are not in the hands of Town men as formerly," and he worried that backcountry delegates would steer a more radical course than the conservative urban elite. Nevertheless, he conceded "the superiority which the country people claim--no man is now supposed to be unequal to a share in government." These represented Revolutionary words indeed from a man who ten years earlier had been frightened out of his wits by Stamp Act protesters. Laurens and other members of the elite realized that Charleston could not continue to resist British policy without the consent and cooperation of the remainder of the colony. Traditional notions of political participation therefore had to bend to meet current needs. In doing so however. Laurens could only foresee "trouble and confusion."46 Charleston voters elected delegates on Monday, January 9, three weeks after the country parishes halloted. Delegates did not have to reside in the parishes they represented, and in the time-honored fashion of deferential politics, upcountry parishes often elected established lowcountry leaders to represent their interests. The delay between rural and urban elections thus allowed urban voters to choose other delegates if the country parishes had already elected a Charleston delegate. A group of Charlestonians met three days before the election at Ramadge's Tavern "to propose proper persons and prepare a list" of candidates. 87 The

Menry Laurens to John Laurens, January 4, 1775, in "Letters From Hon. Henry Laurens to His Son John, 1773-1776," South Carolina Historical Magazine 4 (October 1903): 271.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>South Carolina Gazette, November 21, 1774, January 2, 1775.

composition of this meeting cannot be determined, but voters elected thirteen artisans, eleven merchants, and five planters to the Provincial Congress. Artisans comprised almost one-half of the city's thirty delegates.

Laurens prediction of "trouble and confusion" proved to be prophetic when the 184 members of the Provincial Congress assembled in Charleston on January 11, 1775. Charleston sent thirty delegates, the remainder of the lowcountry elected ninety-six, and the backcountry seventy-six. Upcountry representatives, unfamiliar with the proceedings of deliberative bodies, chafed at what they perceived as unnecessary delays and accused experienced Charleston legislators of deliberately plotting to thin out backcountry ranks. Henry Laurens complained that "according to their ideas everything might have been completed with no more words than are necessary in the bargain and sale of a cow."

The primary divisions in the Provincial Congress, however, revolved around the exception of rice from the non-exportation agreement. Indigo planters and other commodity producers resented an exemption that allowed rice planters to continue trading while others faced economic ruin. John and Edward Rutledge defended the exemption in Charleston as they had done in Philadelphia. Refusing to be intimidated, they argued that rice and indigo, as enumerated articles, could only be exported directly to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Ibid., January 23, 1775; <u>Extracts From the Journals of the Provincial Congresses</u>, 3; Ferrari, "Artisans of the South," 81. The remaining Charleston delegate was minister William Tennant.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup>Henry Laurens to John Laurens, January 22, 1775, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u>, 10:39-40. Laurens offered to put up any delegates in his own house who could not afford lodgings in the city.

Britain.90 South Carolina therefore stood to suffer a much greater economic loss than the Northern colonies if the Association halted trade only with the Mother Country. Shipping figures support the Rutledge's argument. Between 1768 and 1772, Great Britain accounted for less than 8.5 percent of tonnage exported from Philadelphia, 16 percent from Boston, and 18 percent from New York. Comparable export figures for Charleston during those same years averaged 48 percent. Trade with Great Britain accounted for more than 20 percent of the total number of ships entering and leaving Charleston, and more than 40 percent of all inward- and outward- bound tonnage [see Tables 2-1 through 2-4]. Charleston (and the South) traded more with the Mother Country than the Northern ports. The Association thus placed Southerners at greater economic risk. The Rutledges explained that the Carolina delegates had supported a ban on all exports, to Britain or otherwise, but Congress defeated the motion. They had thus managed to secure the exception of rice only when four of five South Carolina delegates walked out of Congress, threatening to disrupt the entire proceedings.91 After much debate, the Provincial Congress approved the exemption--and the Association--by a narrow margin. The delegates devised a compensation scheme to recompense non-rice planters and

<sup>\*\*</sup>Direct exportation was allowed to all ports south of Cape Finesterre, Spain, but not to Western Europe. For an excellent discussion of the debate in the First Continental Congress over the exemption of rice, see Haw, "The Rutledges, Continental Congress, and Independence," 237-239.

<sup>91°</sup>Christopher Gadsden did not walk out and was willing to give up rice and sign the Association for South Carolina alone. See Ryan, "Role of South Carolina in First Continental Congress," 151-152.

appointed parish committees to enforce the Association. To Notwithstanding the controversy over the exemption of rice, the Provincial Congress reelected the same delegates to the Second Continental Congress to meet in May. They feared that electing new delegates would send a signal to London and the other colonies that South Carolina did not support the work of the original delegates.

Despite the facade of unanimity that finally prevailed in the Provincial Congress, divisions remained among Charleston factions over how best to confront the ministerial threat. Indigo planters and small farmers, despite the compensation plan, remained angry over what they perceived to be the greed of self-interested rice planters. Most merchants remained opposed to non-importation, which artisans, of course, strongly supported. Henry Laurens described Charlestonians beset by "feurs and jealousies... best friends and neighbors differing in sentiments upon the mode, yet all concurring that opposition is necessary. Silent men suspected of emitty to our cause, the moderate charged with lakewarmness, rashness and evil designs ascribed to such as are zealously affected. "At Laurens's observations suggest that many of the elite feared that resistance had begun to take a more radical turn than they would have wished, and that the moderate middle ground had become less tenable. John Laurens, writing to his father from London, far

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>See John Drayton, <u>Memoirs of the American Revolution. From its Commencement to the Year 1776. Inclusive, As Relating to the State of South Carolina</u>, 2 vols. (Charleston, 1821, reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 1:171-174. Carolinians never put the provisions of the scheme into effect.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup>Extracts of Journals From the Provincial Congresses, 24-29; South Carolina Gazette, January 23, 1775.

<sup>94</sup>Henry Laurens to John Laurens, January 22, 1775, Papers of Henry Laurens, 10:42.

removed from events in Charleston, expressed deep concern over what he considered the rising tide of democracy. "Far be if from me when we are struggling against oppression to wish to make distinctions unfavourable to liberty," he wrote, "but it gives me great concern to hear that some of our lowest mechanics still bear great part in our public transactions—men who are as contemptible for their ignorance as they may be permicious by their obstinacy." According to Laurens, these "upstart Patriots" required subtle guidance and manipulation. They must continue to think that they acted for themselves. "Laurens's resentment toward artisanal participation in government is emblematic of the elite retirant toward a more moderate and conservative stance in the aftermath of the General Meeting of July 1774 and the Provincial Congress of January 1775. The artisan-planter alliance of the late 1766s had begun to weaken noticeably as planters began to realign with their traditional merchant allies as the pace of events rapidly turned resistance into revolution.

The battle over strict enforcement of non-importation proved just how tenuous gentry authority had become. In early February a ship arrived loaded with coals and potatoes, and the Charleston committee of enforcement promptly dumped the cargo into the harbor. The committee sent another cargo of 300 slaves unloaded to the West Indies. Mean of the State of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup>John Laurens to Henry Laurens, February 18, 1775, Ibid., 10:75-76.

South Carolina Gazette, March 6, 1775.

unnonular decisions of traditional leaders to the power of public opinion for almost the first time. Smyth, a Charleston merchant, undoubtedly thought that items for personal use did not violate the Association, and after some debate, thirty-three members of the Charleston committee agreed with him. Though many of the city's elite were willing to overlook one of their own bringing goods back from England for his family's private pleasure, the city's artisans viewed the matter in an entirely different light.97 According to John Dravton, "hundreds of inhabitants" assembled on Friday, March 24, to denounce the committee's decision and threatened to enforce the terms of the Association by force if necessary. The artisans had opposed the merchants in the debate over non-importation in 1769 and again in 1774, but this demonstration marked the first time they had openly broken with and challenged the authority of the planters. Elite committee members like attorney Edward Rutledge, stunned and surprised at vehement popular outburst, blasted the crowd for questioning the authority of the committee. The assembled multipude shouted him down. When the artisans demanded that the committee "reconsider" its decision, some outraged and insulted aristocrats stormed out of the hall, while others engaged into shouting matches with the crowd. The meeting had degenerated into confrontation and chaos, and the exasperated and besieged members of the General Committee decided to adjourn until Monday. They hoped that by then more members of the Committee would be present to deal with a situation rapidly threatening to spin out of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>Ibid., March 27, 1775. See also David H. Villers, "The Smyth Horses Affair and the Association," South Carolina Historical Magazine 70 (July 1969): 137-148; McCrady, History of South Carolina, 1719-1776, 775-777.

control. <sup>58</sup> The authority of Charleston's traditional leaders had been openly and violently challenged, and their ability to govern effectively and control men and events through extra-legal agencies had become increasingly problematic.

By Monday morning the town was in "universal commotion," and many feared that a real crisis was at hand. The General Committee ordered the militia to stand by to land the horses by force if necessary. The majority of the militia refused, sympathizing with members of the lower ranks of Charleston society. With a throng flowing out of the meeting hall into the street, Christopher Gadsden proposed that the Committee reverse its decision if for no other reason than that "our people are highly dissatisfied with it." William Henry Drayton, one of the few conservative planters who had become more liberal since 1769, agreed. Dravton had roundly condemned the artisans as the "profamm vulsus" during the Townshend Acts crisis, but he now argued that "the people thought an error had been committed, and it was our duty to satisfy our constituents, as we [are] only servants of the public." Drayton's stunning reversal sounded to many of the elite like a clarion call for revolution and represented nothing less than political heresy for an aristocratic and wealthy South Carolina planter. His words brought angry rebuttals from conservative committee members, particularly Edward and John Rutledge, Rawlins Lowndes (speaker of the Commons House), attorney Thomas Bee, and planter Thomas Lvnch. Nevertheless, the moderates overruled the conservatives by one vote, and the committee reversed its decision. The horses and furniture violated the agreement and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup>Drayton, <u>Memoirs of the American Revolution</u>, 1:182-183; <u>South Carolina Gazette</u>, March 27, 1775.

could not be landed. The assembled Charlestonians roared their approval.\* The "Smyth Horse affair" ended peacefully and with the Association intact, but Charleston's planters, merehants, and artisans emerged from the affair more bitterly and openly divided than ever before. The affair symbolized as nothing else had how quickly political protest could become social and political revolution. One loyalist noted that "Mr. Laurens, Mr. Lowndes, Mr. [Miles] Brewton and several other men of fortune tremble at the lengths already gone and strive now to check the torrent ... nothing but division, riot, anarchy, and confusion reigns at present amongst them." From his vartuage point as a loyal British official, Lt. Gov. William Bull astutely observed that "the men of property begin at length to see that the many-headed power of the people, who have hitherto been obediently made use of by their numbers and occasional riots, have discovered their own strength and importance, and are not now so easily governed by their former leaders."

The entire affair, he wrote, had left much "ill-blood."

The events of the summer of 1775 raised tensions and passions to the breaking point. Conservatives, moderates, and radicals clashed openly over the means of resistance, and one prominent merchant's wife despaired that "everything seems to have a very gloomy prospect." South Carolina's five delegates to the Second Continental Congress, according to one royal official, threatened "to cut one another's throats" over

<sup>\*</sup>Ferrari, "Artisans of the South," 83; Drayton, Memoirs of the American Revolution. 1:183-187.

<sup>100</sup> Bargar, "Secret Reports of Alexander Innes," 134.

<sup>101</sup>Bull to Dartmouth, March 28, 1775, SCBPRO 35:80-82.

their political differences. 102 Word arrived on April 14 that Parliament considered Massachusetts to be in onen rebellion and would send additional troops to subdue the Bay Colony by force. Charleston received news of the Battles of Lexington and Concord on May 8. Simultaneously, rumors of British-led slave and Indian rebellions touched off widespread panic in the city. One Loyalist begged for armed intervention before "there fisl a total change of government here, and the very slight mask they now condescend to wear entirely thrown off."103 In June the second session of the Provincial Congress raised a provincial army, elected a Council of Safety to act as the executive arm of the Congress. and passed a loyalty oath. 104 The middle ground of moderation and caution had all but disanneared by the time the new-and last-royal governor arrived in Charleston on Saturday, June 17, 1775. A shocked and stunned Lord William Campbell reported to London that he found nothing left to govern: "the legal administration of justice obstructed, government in a manner annihilated, the most dangerous measures adopted. and acts of the most outrageous and illegal nature committed publicly with impunity." Charlestonians stepped up their harassment of royal officials after the Provincial Congress passed a loyalty oath on June 3. An unexpected and unfriendly visit from four

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup>Mrs. Anne Manigault to Gabriel Manigault, May 3, 1775, Elizabeth Hassell to Gabriel Manigault, June 6, 1775, Manigault Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library; Alexander Innes to Dartmouth, May 1, 1775, SCBPRO 35:95.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm NO3}$  Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, May 16, 1775, in Bargar, ed., "Secret Reports of Alexander Innes," 128.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>164</sup>Wallace, Life of Henry Laurens. 204; Weir, "A Most Important Epocha", 62; McCrady, History of South Carolina, 1719-1776, 789; South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, May 2, June 6, 1775; South Carolina and American General Gazette, April 28, June 9, 1775; Extracts From the Journals of the Provincial Confresses, 33-67.

artisans both frightened and outraged Royal surgeon George Milligen. He vehemently denounced his tormenters as part of "that monster the mob [that] now governs Charlestown." For his part, Governor Campbell waged an ongoing verbal battle with the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety, and by August he admitted that "the powers of government are wrested out of my hands. I can neither protect nor punish."

The Thomas Jeremiah murder dramatically demonstrated how impotent royal government in Charleston had become. Rumors of British plans to foment servile insurrection among lowcountry slaves focused white attention on Thomas Jeremiah, a successful free black harbor pilot. <sup>568</sup> According to Governor Campbell, Jeremiah's only crime was being a prosperous free black man in a city filled with poor and destitute whites. He naturally aroused a great deal of white suspicion and jealousy. <sup>187</sup> In the summer of 1775, Charleston's extra-legal government accused Jeremiah of plotting to aid the British both by guiding British warships into the harbor and by leading a slave

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> South Carolina Guzette, and Country Journal, June 20, 1775; South Carolina and American General Guzette, July 14, August 25, 1775; Mr. Milligen's Report of the state of South Carolina, Sperimer's 1, 1775, SCBPRO 35235. See also George Rougell to Ambony Todd, August 19, 1775, C.O. 5786, Colonial Office Papers, Class 5, America and the West Indice, Original Papers, Letters, Etc., From the Governost, 1734-1776, Public Record Office, London, microfilm, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>160</sup>The rumore began in part because of a letter from Arthur Lee in London warning that the ministry was planning to inclue lasher insurrections to frighten Southern whites into obedience. See Peter H. Wood, ""Liberty is Sweet; "African-American Freedom Struggles in the Yessa Before White Independence," in Afrider F. Voung, ed., Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism. (DeKalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 165.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup>Walter J. Fraser Jr., <u>Charleston! Charleston! The History of A Southern City</u> (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 144.

rebellion. Whites based their charges primarily upon the testimony of two Charleston slaves who supposedly had overheard Jeremiah prophenying that "is great war is coming soon to help the poor Negroes." Members of Charleston's extra-legal government tried and condemned Jeremiah under the provisions of the Negro Act of 1740, and despite efforts by the royal government in Charleston to save his life, local whites hanged Jeremiah and burned his body on Friday, August 18, 1775. \*\*\* Governor Campbell, repulsed and horrified at the proceedings, had talked of intervening and communing the freedman's sentence. Local whites warned the royal governor that if he attempted to help Jeremiah he would be "hanged at my door." Another prominent member of the elite cautioned Campbell to prepare for "a flame all the water in the Cooper River would not extinguish" if he attempted to save Jeremiah.

<sup>108</sup>Wood, "'Liberty is Sweet," 167.

Mose Peter H. Wood, ""Taking Care of Business' in Revolutionary South Carolinas, Republicanism and the Slave Society," in Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, ets., The Southern Experience in the American Revolution, (Chapel Hill NC: University or North Carolina Press, 1978), 284-287; Wood, "Liberty is Sweet," "165-168; Weir, Colonial South Carolina. 200-203; Henry Laurens 10 often Laurens, August 20, 1775, "Egners of Henry Laurens, 10:320-322; Sylvia R. Frey, Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in A Revolutionary, 286 (Princeton NI: Princeton University Press, 1999), 575-87, Den Donald Duncan, "Servitude and Slavery in Colonial South Carolina, 1670-1776," Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1971, 387-483.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup>Lord William Campbell to "My Lord," August 19, 1775, SCBPRO 35:186; Fraser, <u>Charleston, Charleston!</u>, 144-147.

that existed among Charleston Whigs that summer and the vapidity to which royal government had been driven by the events of the preceding decade.<sup>111</sup>

Campbell turned his attention to the Commons House of Assembly and tried to reason with the only legal body of representatives remaining in the colony. He pleaded with them to remain loyal to a government which had brought prosperity and happiness to Charleston and urged them to turn away from measures designed to bring only destruction and "inevitable ruin." The Commons replied defiantly that if ruin was to be their lot "we wait the event, and leave the justice of our cause to the great sovereign of the universe, upon whom the fate of kingdoms and empires depends." Thoroughly disgusted with the political turn of events and fearing for his life, Campbell dissolved the Commons House for the last time on Friday, September 15, 1775, and fled to the safety of a royal ship in Charleston Harbor. 113 Royal government in South Carolina had come to an end, and the South's largest city now was now entirely in the hands of the rebels.

Charleston loyalists, primarily royal officials and conservative merchants and planters, never posed any serious opposition to Whig leaders. The chief loyalist threat in 1775 came from the backcountry. Charleston leaders were thus pre-occupied in the fall of 1775 with neutralizing that section. The fate of most Charleston loyalists tended to be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup>Peter H. Wood has recently written about the role played by Southern blacks in accelerating white rebellion against the British, and he dispels the notion that ideas about liberty and freedom "trickled down" from the elite to slaves. See Wood, "'Liberty is Sweet."

South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal Extraordinary, July 22, 1775.
 South Carolina and American General Gazette, September 22, 1775; South Carolina Gazette, October 3, 1775.

either exile or tragedy. Some loyalists, like Lieutenant Governor William Bull and planter William Wragg, chose to retreat into political exile on their lowcountry estates until driven from the province. Others, like merchant Miles Brewton, left the state in 1775. Brewton's entire family perished at sea en route to Philadelphia, while Wragg drowned in an attempt to save his son after a shipwreck off the coast of Holland. Others remained in the community until the passage of the controversial Loyalty Oath of 1778, which forced them either to swear allegiance to South Carolina or leave the state. After the British re-captured Charleston in 1780, many Whigs Joined the remaining loyalists in swearing allegiance to the British in order to practice their trades. Consequently, in 1782 when the Whig Jacksonborough legislature compiled a list of 425 families for banishment, confiscation, or amercement, 90 percent were from Charleston or the surroundine lowcountry. <sup>114</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup>See Lewis P. Jones, <u>The South Carolina Civil War of 1775</u> (Lexington SC, 1975); Fraser, Charleston! Charleston!. 163, 167; Kinloch Bull Jr., The Oligarchs in Colonial and Revolutionary Charleston: Lieutenant Governor William Bull II and His Family (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 230-287; Geraldine W. Meronev. "William Bull's First Exile From South Carolina, 1777-1781," South Carolina H historical Magazine 80 (April 1979): 91-104; Ella Pettit Levett, "Lovalism in Charleston, 1761-1784," Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 1936. 12-16; Robert W. Barnwell Jr., "The Migration of Loyalists From South Carolina," Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 1937, 34-42; Robert W. Barnwell, "Loyalists in South Carolina, 1765-1785," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1941; Ralph L. Andreano and Herbert O. Werner, "Charleston Loyalists: A Statistical Note." South Carolina Historical Magazine 60 (July 1959): 164-168; Kathy Roe Coker, "The Punishment of Revolutionary War Loyalists in South Carolina," Ph.D. dissertation. University of South Carolina, 1987; Robert S. Lambert, South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987); Coker, "Absentees as Loyalists in Revolutionary War South Carolina," South Carolina Historical Magazine 96 (April 1995); 119-134.

By late September 1775, Charleston had been transformed from the city that had received Governor Montagu nine years earlier. The economic, political, and social stability of the prosperous metropolis of 1766 had been replaced by "division, riot, anarchy, and confusion." The harbor, closed to both imports and exports, lay empty of commercial vessels. Armed citizens in rebellion to the Crown marched through the city. Artisans had played a pivotal role in implementing and enforcing the economic boycott against Britain and increasingly flexed their political muscle both in the street and the assembly hall.115 The illegal bodies that now governed the city and province contained artisans and mechanics as well as the traditional planters and merchants. The cessation of trade made money scarce and debts difficult to collect, particularly with the colony's courts closed. The economic boycott had an immediate and widespread impact not only in the city but throughout the hinterlands of Charleston's trading empire in South Carolina. Georgia. North Carolina, and the West Indies. With Charleston closed to commerce, staple commodities ceased to flow downriver to town. Conversely, wagons loaded with textiles and other manufactured goods no longer rolled overland up the Ashley River Road. The economic lifeline between much of the Lower South and the outside world had been cut off. With the harbor closed and commerce at a halt Charleston's wealth and prosperity might quickly evaporate. "Good God, what are we about to do?" asked Henry Laurens. "We are on the eve of a total suspension of all

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, June 10, 1775, in Bargar, ed., "Reports of Alexander Innes," 134; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, July 2, 1775, "Letters from Henry Laurens to His Son John," South Carollina Historical Magazaine 5 (January 1904): 12; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, September 18, 1775, Papers of Henry Laurens, 10:396-3975, South Carollina and Americand General Gazette, September 1, 1775.

trade, "he wrote, "stripped of gold and silver money, and have no resources. We are all mad, all wrong, "its "phe memories of the prosperous and happy days of 1766 had finded into the misty past, soon to be replaced by the darker night of revolution and war. It would be many long years before "joy, joility and mirth" reigned again. Charleston would discover that the seeds of rebellion could reap bitter fruit indeed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup>Henry Laurens to Richard Oswald, January 4, 1775, Laurens to John Laurens, June 8, September 18, 1775, Papers of Henry Laurens, 10:21-23, 166, 396-397.

TABLE 2-1

Number and Tonnage of Ships Inward Bound From Great Britain, 1768-1772

New York 79 Philadelphia 60	6,946 75 7,158 41 6,924 46	3,785 39 5,504 42	6,830 72 4,055 63 4,705 71	7,502 93 6,850 61 8,157 63	72   9,325   6,117   7,757   10,932
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Source: Bureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970</u>, 2 vols. (Washington DC, 1975), 2:1180-1181.

TABLE 2-2

Average Number and Tonnage of Ships From Great Britain, 1769-1772
As a Percentage of Total Inward Bound Shipping

	Number	Tonnage
Boston	9.78	19.58
New York	9.84	22.28
Philadelphia	8.42	16.10
Charleston	20.92	41.98

Source: Bureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times</u> to 1970, 2 vols. (Washington DC, 1975), 2:1180-1181.

TABLE 2-3

Number and Tonnage of Ships Outward Bound To Great Britain, 1768-1772

Boston New York Philadelphii Charleston		1769 66   6,707 47   3,955 37   4,049 109   14,681	1770 56   5,819 46   4,665 25   3,208 81   11,727	1771 55   5,750 45   4,830 27   3,222	1772 57   6,178 39   4,280 23   3,123
Charleston	121   15,873	109   14,681	81 11,727	119 15,792	115 15,610

Source: Bureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970</u>, 2 vols. (Washington DC, 1975), 2:1180-1181.

TABLE 2-4

Average Number and Tonnage of Ships To Great Britain, 1768-1772, As a Percentage of Total Outward Bound Shipping

	Number	Tonnage
Boston	7.86	16.42
New York	7.88	17.60
Philadelphia	4.32	8.48
Charleston	23.88	47.38

Source: Bureau of the Census, <u>Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970</u>, 2 vols. (Washington DC, 1975), 2:1180-1181.

## CHAPTER THREE "WE ARE AN UNDONE PEOPLE": WAR AND OCCUPATION 1776-1782

"Charlestown is now melancholy to behold, houses shut up, wharves and stores all empty, trade not carried on, places of worship almost deserted, scarce a woman to be sent in the streets, men continually on military duty, and no other music but drum and fife daily sounding. Our trust I hope is ultimately on the Great Ruler of the Universe." Josish Smith Jr. 1776.

"Has the God of heaven and of earth deserted his kingdom? Has he delivered us up as a prey to our enemies? Has he totally abandoned this world to tyranny and oppression? No. The same God still reigns in heaven—even the same mighty, just and glorious God." John Lewis, minister, 1777

"We have compelled them to take the most valuable jewel in the American crown and to ruin our united cause, for in the capture of Charles Town I see the destruction of the confederace,"

Henry Laurens, 1777

Between 17% and 1782 Charleston became a cauldron of social, political, and economic chaos. A movement that began as a political redress of grievances in 1765 became a radical revolution as a result of six years of war, invasion, and occupation. Historians have long contended that the Revolutionary War years in South Carolina were a time of bland conservativism, with no long-lasting social or economic consequences. The exigencies of war and occupation, however, disrupted traditional trading patterns, because the stablished religion, weakened the institution of slavery, and irrevocably altered the notifical ties that bound white Carolinians together. The war procelled

Charleston's elite-planters, merchants, and lawyers-much farther down the road of revolution than any of them had desired to go and ultimately accelerated the shift of power from the coastal elite to upcountry planters.

The British attacked Charleston three times between 1776 and 1780 and finally conquered the South's most important city in May 1780. Inflation, scarcity, and naval blockades nearly ruined Charleston's economy. The great fire of 1778 made a worsening situation even more intolerable by destroying almost one-quarter of the city's homes and businesses. Charlestonians pressed by high prices took to the streets to protest forestalling and leniency in enforcing Whig loyalty oaths. The constitutions of 1776 and 1778 attempted to bring political order and stability out of chaos, but the need for intrasectional unity in the face of war forced the lowcountry elite to compromise on the issues of established religion and backcountry representation. Most ominously, white Carolinians stood by helplessly as their slaves openly rebelled, ran off to join the British. or simply vanished into the countryside. Some prominent Charlestonians questioned the morality of the institution itself. Others openly debated the propriety of arming slaves to defend white liberty. Thus the prevailing notion that Charleston's elite remained firmly in control of Revolutionary events and never felt seriously threatened by wartime disruptions must be overturned.1 The exigencies of war forced lowcountry aristocrats to

Nost of the scholarship on the Revolution in South Carolina follows this line of thought. Robert M. We't writes that the Revolution in South Carolina was "raematashly conservative movement" that never led to any extensive social or economic change. The elite remained responsive to popular needs and institutional change was therefore very small. Weir, Colonial South Carolina: A History (Millwood YV; KTO Press; 1933), 332-333. For other conservative interpretations, see also George Winston Lane Ir., "The Middlenoss of Eighteenth-Century South Carolina: A Clonial Dynasty, 1683-1787,"

make a number of political concessions to "outsiders" both within Charleston and in the backcountry, and they often lacked the power to govern effectively in the face of overwhelmine social and economic unheaval.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that the war years produced similar dislocations in other urban centers, but the upheaval and chaos affected postwar growth in remarkably different ways. Elaine Forman Crane describes Newport, Rhode Island as "a town at war with itself." The war created economic dislocations, social divisions and animosity, and political and religious discord. British occupation drove enterprising merchants away. Those who remained could not effectively capitalize on new commercial opportunities with the west because of geographic constraints and a continuing reliance upon British markets. As a result, the once-flourishing colonial city had stagnated and declined by

Ph.D. dissertation. Emory University, 1990; John C. Meleney, The Public Life of Aedanus Burke: Revolutionary Republican in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); E. Stanly Godbold Jr. and Robert H. Woody, Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution (KnoxvilleTN: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Jerome J. Nadelhaft, The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina (Orono ME: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1981); Richard Brent Clow, "Edward Rutledge of South Carolina, 1749-1800; Unproclaimed Statesman," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1976; Eva B. Poythress, "Revolution By Committee: An Administrative History of the Extralegal Committees in South Carolina, 1774-1776," Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1975: Weir, "The Harmony We Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," William and Mary Quarterly 26 (October 1969): 473-501; Marvin R. Zahniser, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father (Charel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967); Raymond G. Starr, "The Conservative Revolution: South Carolina Public Affairs, 1775-1790," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1964; George C. Rogers Jr., Evolution of A Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758-1812) (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1962): Frederick P. Bowes, The Culture of Early Charleston (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1942).

1800.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Lynne Withey's study of colonial Rhode Island found that the Revolution played a seminal role in the rise of Providence and the decline of Newport. Before 1750, Providence remained economically dependent upon Newport and operated primarily as a local center of trade. Increased direct trade with Europe brought Providence into direct competition with Newport by the Revolution and during the war Providence expanded while Newport declined. Withey argued that the war and occupation destroyed Newport's trade and forced many in the city office. Providence managed to escape occupation and kept its population and economic leadership intact. The city flourished as a result of a combination of factors, primarily demography, geography, and a strong, financially secure elite that invested in an improved physical and financial infrastructure after the war. Newport, conversely, never recovered.<sup>3</sup>

Charles G. Steffen found in Baltimore that an artisanal "radical vision of republicanism ... clashed with the conservative republicanism of merchants and lawyers." Baltimore "fought its own small war of independence, not against the British but rather against a conservative assembly [in Annapolis] determined to preserve the dominance of the planter gentry." Lacking a traditional ruling elite, however, Baltimore's economic society remained fluid and open to talented and enterprising men who capitalized on the economic opportunities of the Revolution to draw trade and capital

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Elaine Forman Crane, A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), 126-140, 157-166.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Lynne Withey, <u>Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century</u> (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 1-7, 77-78, 97-102.

away from Annapolis. During the war, according to Gary Lawson Browne, Baltimore became a "central trading depot in the war effort," drawing commerce away from occupied Philadelphia. The town never attracted British military attention as did Charleston and the more populous Northern ports, and Baltimore became a major supplier for the allied American and French armies. The war thus "revolutionized Baltimore society," acting as the catalyst for the town's remarkable postwar growth and prosperity. Baltimore flourished and grew in the postwar decades.

In the urban North, according to Gary B, Nash, the war turned resistance into a 
"dual revolution," accelerating the formation of horizontal rather than vertical divisions in 
society. Nash found that Boston, New York, and Philadelphia all experienced an internal 
revolution marked by increasing class consciousness, pervasive poverty, declining 
deference, and narrowing of opportunity among laboring people. Eric Foner argued that 
the Revolution in Philadelphia transformed life in the city by "greatly accelerating) the 
transition between older and more modern forms of economic and political life." The 
war politicized the masses and propelled the city "along the path of capitalist 
development." by providing unprecedented opportunities for the growth of "banks,

charles G. Steffen, Die Mechanies of Baltimore; Workers and Politics in the Age
of Revolution, 1765–1812 (Urbana II. University of Illinois Press, 1949); Steffen, From
Gentlemen to Townsmen. The Gentry of Baltimore Counts, Maryland, 1650–1776
(Lexington NY, University Press of Kentucky, 1993), esp. 137–167; Edward C.
Papenfuse, in Pursuit of Profit: The Amanpolis Merchants in the Fax of the American
Revolution, 1763–1809 (Baltimore in the Nation, 1789–1861) (Chapel Hill NC: University of
North Carolina Press, 1980), 3-13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Gary B. Nash, <u>The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution</u> Abr. ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

corporations and other modern financial institutions." Similarly, Thomas M. Doerflinger asserted that conservative Philadelphia merchants took creative entrepreneurial risks and capitalized on the economic opportunities created by the exigencies of war. Philadelphia merchants thus laid the foundation for the "entrepreneurial origins of American economic development" in the postwar years.<sup>7</sup>

Charleston's wartime experience thus had much in common with other American urban centers. The war created challenges to established political leaders, to the time-honored social institutions of slavery and religion, and to Charleston's economic dominance in the region. Wartime dislocations may appear at first glance to be ephemeral and transitory. To those who lived through them they certainly were not. By 1790, backcountry dissidents had triumphed in their demands for constitutional revision and removal of the capital inland, while the institution of slavery came under unprecedented attack in the postwar decades. Furthermore, the Revolution created new economic opportunities, as inland merchants and planters petitioned for and invested in towns, markets, roads, bridges, and canals to link the hinterland with the market economy. The war forever altered Charleston's position of unchallenged dominance within both the state and the region. It was not surtriving that Oliver Hart, minister of

Eric Foner, <u>Tom Paine and Revolutionary America</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), esp. 68-69.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Thomas M. Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 5, 135-164, 283-334.

Charleston's First Baptist Church, told his brother in 1779 that "unless providence kindly and remarkably interposes on our behalf, we are an undone people."

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After Royal Governor Lord William Campbell abandoned Charleston for the relative safety of a British warship in the harbor, the city's rebel leaders considered it only a matter of weeks before the British launched a military assault upon their city. The Continental Congress resolved in early November 1775 that "the town of Charles Town ought to be defended" against possible British attack. Carolina's leaders had been planning Charleston's defense for months, even before Campbell took refuge aboard the HMS Tamar on September 15, 1775. For more than six months South Carolina's Council of Safety had been heatedly debating a proposal to block the harbor by sinking ships across the channel, while military matters dominated the first session of the Second Provincial Congress when it convened in Charleston for four weeks in November. 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, February 16, 1779, Oliver Hart Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., <u>Journals of the Continental Congress</u>, 1774-1789, 34 vols. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), 3:326.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Papers of the First Council of Safety of the Revolutionary Party in South Carolina, June-November, 1775; "South Carolina Historical Magazing 1(1900): 41-75, 119-135, 183-205, 279-310, 2 (1901): 3-26, 97-107, 167-193, 259-267, 3 (1902): 3-15; South Carolina and American General Gazette, September 1, September 22, 1775.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Hemry Laurens to John Laurens, May 30, 1775, Hemry Laurens to James Laurens, September 22, 1775, in Philip M. Hamer et al., eds., The <u>Pages no Flemer</u>, Jaurens 14 vois. to date (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 10:157-161, 413-415, William Edwil Hemphill, ed., <u>Extrasts From the Journals of the Proviousla Congresses of South Carolina, 1775-1776</u>, The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: South Carolina archites), 211-216.

The British understood Charleston's political and economic importance, not only to South Carolina but for the Southern colonies as a whole. Southern Royal governors bombarded London with a litany of complaints throughout 1775 about Charleston's pervasive and insidious influence in the Lower South. Governor Campbell protested that "every rebellious measure which has been adopted in this part of the continent originated in Charlestown. [It] is the fountainhead from whence all the violence flows; stop that, and the rebellion in this part of the continent will I trust be at an end.\* Owermor James Wright of Georgia maintained that Savannah's Sons of Liberty had followed Charleston's lead, and he pleaded in vain for stronger measures designed to cut off the growing rebellion in Charleston. Owermor Josish Martin of North Carolina made similar requests after South Carolina's Provincial Congress sent recruiting parties into his colony in 1775. Martin told the Earl of Dartmouth that Charleston acted as "the head and heart

<sup>&</sup>quot;Lord William Campbell to Josiah Martin, December I, 1775, in William Bell Clark, ed, Naval Documents of the American Revolution. I o'vols, to date (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1964), 2:1225, Campbell to Dartmouth, October 19, 1775, Transcripts of Records in the British Public Record Office Relating To South Carolina, 1661-1782, 3 volumes, 35:271-281, Records Deposited With The Secretary, Records of the Secretary of State, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, (hereafter circles as CEIPPA).

<sup>&</sup>quot;Governor Sir James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, August 24, 1774, February I, 1775, May 23, 1775, May 23, 1775, May 24, 1774, May 25, 1775, May 24, 1774, May 25, 1775, May 24, 1775, May 24, 1774, May 26, 1776, May 27, 1776,

of their boasted province" and that a single armed ship could conquer it. 

Southern royal officials understood the role played by the coastal urban center as the economic lifeline between the hinterlands and overseas markets. Campbell argued that if the British navy scized Charleston, the back settlements of Georgia and the two Carolinas would be driven by economic necessity to submit to Royal authority. He had personally witnessed the long train of wagons that rolled into "the capital of the three southern provinces" laden with produce to be exchanged for manufactured goods. "They almost entirely depend for their necessary supplies," he wrote, "on the market of Charleston." 
Continental congressman William Hooper of North Carolina confirmed that western North Carolina's commercial dependence upon Charleston would compel his state to act if the British attacked the city. He warned his state legislature to spare no expense in defending "that metropolis." 

Lord George Germain informed General Henry Clinton that "Charleston is the seat of commerce of all that part of America and consequently the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Governor Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, June 30, 1775, <u>Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 9:209-216.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Lord William Campbell to Major General Henry Cliston, March 26, 1776, Mazul Documents of the American Revolution, 4-531; Memorial of Lord William Campbell and Others to Lord George Germain, August 1777, <u>Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 4-182-148. See also Theodorns Swaine Drage to Benjamin Franklin, March 2, 1771, in Leonard W. Laburec, ed. <u>The Papers of Benjamin Franklin</u>, 31 vols. to date (New Haven CT; Vale University Press, 1999-3). 1841. Drage was an Anglican missionary in Regulator North Carolina. He wrote Franklin that "it is to be considered that these people are three hundred and odd unlies from the sea of government [of North Carolina], and searce have three hundred and odd pence to carry them there any one of them. Charles Town is the marcht they go to."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>William Hooper to the North Carolina Convention, November 16, 1776, in Paul H. Smith, ed., <u>Letters of Delegates To Congress</u>, 1774-1789, 24 vols. to date (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1976-), 5:500-503.

place where the most essential interests of the planters are concentered. The restoration of the legal government there must and will have very important consequences."

Though officials in London did not act quickly or decisively enough to please the Southern Royal governors, Dartmouth finally ordered a naval blockade of the major American ports, including Charleston, in July 1775.18

Six years of intermittent British naval blockades, self-imposed trading restrictions, and British occupation brought economic disaster to Charleston's once-thriving economy. Carolina exports to Great Britain dropped from £579,549 in 1775 to £13,668 in 1776, and fell to £1,074 by 1778. Charleston's imports from Great Britain declined from £378,116 sterling in 1774 to £6,245 in 1775." Searcity became a problem during 1775, and after non-exportation went into effect on September 10 the normal exchange of goods and produce ceased almost completely. Charleston's markets stood empty, and merchants closed their stores at the time of year when foodstuffs and staple commodities usually

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Lord George Germán to Major-General Henry Clinton or Officer Appointed to Command Expedition to Southern Colonies, December 6, 1775, <u>Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 11:204-205. See also Precis Prepared For the King of Events Leading Up to the Expedition Against the Southern Colonies, <u>December</u> 31, 1775, <u>Naval</u> Documents of the American Revolution, 3:465-467.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Earl of Dartmouth to Lords of Admiralty, July 1, 1775, <u>Documents of the American Revolution.</u>, 11:23-24.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Bureau of the Census, comp., <u>Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970</u> 2 vols. (Washington DC: Bureau of the Census, 1975), 2:1176. The Continental Association cut off imports from Great Britain on December 1, 1774, but postponed implementing non-exportation until September 10, 1775, so that Southern planters could export their crops in 1775. See Frank V. Wyan Er., "The Rod of South Carolina in the First Continental Congress," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 60 (1959): 147-153.

piled up on the city's wharves. Newspaper reports noted early in 1776 that "the markets have been of late very seantily provided and everything sold at an extravagant price." Of the work of late very seantily provided and everything sold at an extravagant price. "Of the work of sold in a public way to be done, but that of fortifying the harbour and fitting out of vessels for defense." William Ancrum, a merchant-planter with the firm of Ancrum, Lance, and Loocock, warned his overseers to do the best they could with existing plantation tools, as "there is not a hoe nor a bar of iron to be got. If times do not become better soon (of which there seems little prospect) we shall be greatly distressed for many articles." The scarcity of hard money made collecting debts problematic at best, and the crisis closed the courts that usually offered creditors relief in such cases. Planters who usually came to town during the "season" instead remained on their country estates during the winter of 1775-1776. One planter gloomily reported that "Charles Town now has the most melancholy appearance. There is no peace, astisfaction or happiness to be enjoyed in it." <sup>33</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>South Carolina and American General Gazette, December 8, 1775, January 19, 1776.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Josiah Smith Jr. to James Poyas, January 10, 1776, <u>Naval Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 3:724-727.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>William Ancrum to Marlow Pryor, March 23, 1776, William Ancrum Letterbook and Account Book, 1776-1780, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. Ancrum owned Redband and Good Hope, near Camden.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>John Farquhasson to Gabriel Manigault, July 10, 1775, Manigault Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston; Henry Laurens to James Laurens, January 6, 1776, Henry Laurens to Martha Laurens, February 29, 1776, Papers of Henry Laurens, 114-7, 129-132; Stephen Mazyok to "My Dear Brother," February 7, 1776, Daniel Elliott Huger Smith Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, See also Frances.

The Provincial Congress attempted to strengthen the city's declining economic fortunes by restoring a measure of political stability. In November 1775 the Continental Congress recommended that South Carolinians call "a full and free representation of the people" to establish new governments "during the continuance of the present dispute between Great Britain and the colonies." Conservatives like John and Edward Rutledge resisted this step as long as possible, but by early 1776 the elite recognized the growing need to check the confusion created by the absence of legal government. Royal government ceased to exist, the economy lay in ruins, slaves had become increasingly ungovernable, and the town needed to prepare for a British attack. The Provincial Congress ignored the call for "a fall and free representation of the people" and instead chose an eleven-man committee on February 11, 1776, to prepare a new constitution. Traditional members of the Charleston elite-planters, lawyers, and merchants with close ties to each other-dominated the committee. A The Revolutionary crisis had at last

Reuse Kepner, ed., "A British View of The Siege of Charleston, 1776. Journal of Southern History II (February 1945) 9-697. On January 17, 176, the Fellowship Society of Charleston granted a grace period to members delinquent in their dues because of the "great searcity of eath." "Nothing but the absolute necessity of the times has induced the society to give this indulgence." Fellowship Society Papers, microfilm, South Carolliniana Library, 317.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Extracts From the Journals of the Provincial Congresses, 181-182, 185. The committee consisted of attorney-planters Charles Cotsworth Plinckney, John Rutledge, and Charles Pinckney, merchant-planters Hawny Laurens and Christopher Gadsden, and Charles Pinckney, merchant-planters Hawny Laurens and Christopher Gadsden, and Dinners Rawlins Lownde, Arthur Middleton, Hormay Buddieton, Thomas Bee, Thomas Lynch Jr., and Thomas Heyward Jr. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney saf for St. John Colleton, Rutledge For Christ Church, Lowndes for St. Bartholomew, Bee for St. Andrews, and Lynch for Prince Goorge's, Winysh. The remainder represented Charleston. Henry and Arthur Middleton were father and son, the Pinckneys were cousins, Henry Middleton and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney were father- and son-in-law, and Pinckney and Arthur Middleton were Tourbera-in-law.

compelled the colony to take the extraordinary step of establishing a new government and written constitution, but political "outsiders" would have no hand in its creation. 
Charleston aristocrats put aside their differences over non-importation and united to exclude upstart mechanics and backcountrymen from the committee. Six of the eleven committee members represented Charleston, and all eleven sat for lowcountry parishes. 
No delegate from a midlands or backcountry parish served, and only one, from Georgetown, represented any of the outlying lowcountry parishes. 
The committee brought the results of its labor before the Congress on March 2, and the delegates began debating on March 8. Arguments over the language of the document abruptly ended after the Provincial Congress received news from Savannah two weeks later that the King had declared the colonies "in actual rebellion" and had closed all colonial ports to commerce. 
This startling news galvanized the Congress and ended the debate. The delegates promptly adopted the Constitution on March 26, 1776. The Second Provincial Congress adjourned that morning and reconvened that afference as the General Assembly."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibid., 71-78, Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey et al., eds., <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives</u>, 5 vols. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1974-1992), 2:69-72, 259-263, 323-325, 390-394, 415-418, 456-460, 522-528, 577-581, 3:450-451; Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 28.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Extracts From the Journals of the Provincial Congresses, 242, 53-425, 263, South Carolina and American General Gazette, Arri J. 1776; Falvaud McCrady, The History of South Carolina In the Revolution, 1775-1780 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1901), 112-113. On August 23, 1775, King George III refused to receive the "Olive Branch" Petition from the Second Continental Congress and issued a proclamation declaring the American colonies to be in a state of open rebellion. On December 23, 1775, the King issued a royal proclamation closing the American colonies to all trade and commerce, effective March 1, 1776. See John R. Aldam, Allistory of the American Revolution (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 228, Robert Middleksaf, Tig. Glorious Cause: The American Revolution 1766-1789 (New York: Corfort University Press.

The constitution of 1776 certainly represented no sharp break with the past. Instead it sought to pacify political dissenters by making government somewhat more inclusive during the Revolutionary crisis without radically altering traditional institutions of government. The new document nevertheless kent governmental control firmly in the hands of the coastal parishes. The new General Assembly had 202 members, increased from 184 in the Provincial Congresses, and substantially more than the 48 in the colonial Commons House of Assembly. Charleston alone held 30 of those 202 seats, and the city combined with the surrounding parishes to control 96 of 202 seats (48 percent). The lowcountry parishes altogether held 126 of 202 (62 percent). Jerome J. Nadelhaft has noted that Charleston, though still heavily favored, could no longer govern without regard for other areas.27 Nevertheless, with only 49 members needed for a quorum, Charleston's members could easily exert an undue influence on events in the assembly. William Tennent, minister of Charleston's Congregational Church and a leading religious dissenter, complained that "so many circumstances concur to give the capital and adjacent parishes the advantage in representation that there is danger that the government of this state in time will degenerate into an oligarchy."28 The backcountry consisted of 60

1982), 313-316.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Nadelhaft, Disorders of War. 30-31. The Constitution of 1776 is printed in Transic Newton Thorpe, ed. The Federal and State Constitution, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States. Territories, and Colonies New or Herstoffere Forming the Utilised States of America, 7 vols. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), 63241-3248, and in Extracts From the Journals of the Provincial Congresses, 256-263.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Newton B. Jones, ed., "Writings of the Reverend Willliam Tennent, 1740-1777," South Carolina Historical Magazine 61 (1960): 189.

percent of the population but held only 38 percent of the seats (76 of 202). This represented an increase from 32 percent in the Provincial Congress. The constitution provided no elected upper house. Instead, the General Assembly elected thirteen members to a Legislative Council which acted as an upper house. It also elected a president, vice-president, and a six-member Privy Council to act as an advisory panel to the president. Finally, the new constitution retained both the established church and the existing suffrage qualifications. Carolina's leaders never submitted the document to the people for ruitification.<sup>29</sup>

The constitution of 1776 satisfied no one. At first glance it appears to have been a counter-revolutionary document, strengthening Charleston's aristocratic grip upon the reins of power. The document survived for only two years, however, because Charleston's traditional leaders could no longer rule arbitrarily over the remainder of the province without some form of consensus. Both Charleston artisans\*\* and backcountry dissidents, who together constituted 43 percent of the Second Provincial Congress, played no role whatsoever in drawing up the document. Nor had any been elected to fill

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>Weir, Colonial South Carolina. 327;Daniel Joseph McDonough, "Christopher Gladden and Henry Laurean: The Parallel Lives of Two American Partics," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1990, 284; David Ramsay, The History of South Carolina, From Its First Settlement In 1670. To The Year 1808, 2 vols. (Charleston SC: David Longword, 1809), 1262–263, McCrady, South Carolina In the Revolution, 1775–1788," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1965, 1925.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Artisans are defined as laborers who performed skilled work with their hands. The terms artisan, mechanic, and craftsmen are used interchangeably in this study and do not include unskilled laborers.

positions in the new government.<sup>21</sup> The more liberal members of the Charleston elite such as Arthur Middleton, William Henry Drayton, and Christopher Gadsden, argued that the document did not go far enough.<sup>22</sup> Charleston conservatives, of course, disliked the fact that it had become necessary at all. And religious dissenters in both Charleston and the backcountry attacked the constitution because it did not guarantee religious freedom.

William Tennent, a Charleston Congregationalist minister and a member of the Second

<sup>&</sup>quot;Mary Catherine Ferrati," "Artissas of the South: A Comparative Study of Norfolk, Charleston and Alexandria, 1763-1800," Ph. Dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1992, 88, Richard Walsh, Charleston's Sons of Libertre. A Study of the Artissas, 1753-1529 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1959), 81. Artissas comprised fully one-third of Charleston's delegation. They were Michael Katleisen, Diniel Camono, Builder, William Johnson, blacksmith, Peter Timothy, printer, Joseph Vernee, carpenter, Edward Weyman, upholisterer, Cato Ach, carpenter, James observable, and the Carolina Press, 1959, 81. Activated to the Carolina Press, 1959, 81. Activated to the Carolina Press, 1959, 81. Activated to the Carolina Property of the Carolina Property of the Carolina Property of the South Catolina House, 2:675, 2444, 68-69, 61, 241-25, 83-83, 57, 16-718, 73-733, 759-761. For a list of elected officers to the new government, see Ramssy, History of South Carolina, 1670-1808, 12-63.

<sup>32</sup> The term "liberal" is used here rather than "radical" for several reasons. Middleton, Drayton, and Gadsden have traditionally been identified by South Carolina historians as "radical" because they sought aggressive measures in resisting British policy, and favored independence much earlier than other members of the Carolina elite like Henry Laurens and Rawlins Lowndes. This is certainly true enough, but Middleton, Drayton, and Gadsden were nevertheless never very far out in front of their colleagues, politically or socially, and none favored any truly "radical" measures at any time during the Revolution. To be sure, Gadsden supported disestablishment of the Anglican Church, and acted somewhat as a spokesmen for the city's artisans in the early stages of the conflict, but after 1778, as we shall see, he broke with them completely over the enforcement of an oath of allegiance. As Richard Walsh has argued, Gadsden was "radical" in the sense that "his hatred of imperial, political, and economic control fed his desires for independence and self-determination." But within South Carolina, "Gadsden was still moved by views as a merchant. . . . he was horror stricken at the unrest which the Revolution had unleashed." Walsh, "Christopher Gadsden: Radical or Conservative Revolutionary?" South Carolina Historical Magazine 63 (1962):195-203.

Provincial Congress, immediately enlisted the help of upcountry dissenters in circulating a petition to have the Anglican church disestablished. But it would take more opportune circumstances, a British naval assault, and complete separation from the Mother Country before democratic-minded Carolinians could make more radical and permanent alterations to the constitution.

Political squabbling among radicals, moderates, and conservatives over the limits and excesses of the constitution—and the revolution it represented—ended abruptly when Governor. John Rutledge received news on May 31, 1776, of a large British fleet sighted twenty miles north of Charleston.<sup>24</sup> Artisans, merchants, and planters now united to defend their metropolis against military invasion. Charlestonians had been preparing the city's defenses since the spring of 1775, when the Provincial Congress appointed the first Council of Safety to direct the colony's military efforts. British warships had lain at another in Charleston Harbor throughout the summer and fall of that year and had finally

John Wesley Brinsfeld, Religion and Politics in Colonial South Canolina (Easley SC: Southern Historical Press, 1983), 64; George C. Rogers Ir., Clutch and State in Eighteenth-Century South Carolina (Charleston SC: Dalcho Historical Society, 1999).
21: Elisha P. Doulgas, Rebels and Democratis: The Strongel For Equal Political Rights and Majority Rule During The American Revolution (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Pers. 1955), 39-43.

<sup>&</sup>quot;McCrady, South Carolina in the Revolution 1775-1780, 137, John Adams had this us say about South Carolina's new government." Who young gentlemen from South Carolina's new government. "South Carolina now in this city [Philadelphila], who were in Charles Town when their new Constitution was promulgated, and when their new Covernor and Council and Assembly walked out in procession ... buld me that they were beheld by the people with transports and teass of joy. The people gued at them with a kind of rapture." John Adams to Abigail Adams, May 17, 1776, in Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., The Adams Paripers, Series II, Adams Family Correspondence, 2 volumes (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 1411.

salled for Cape Fear, North Carolina, in early 1776. <sup>29</sup> Royal Governor William Campbell strongly protested that the British ships should remain in Charleston because of "the vast difference between the provinces in wealth, strength, and of course in the power of doing mischief." <sup>206</sup> After the British departure, the city's militia remained on constant alert, reinforced by country militia from the surrounding lowcountry parishes. <sup>29</sup> The Council of Safety fortified Sullivan's Island in Charleston Harbort, while troops mounted cannon on the waterfront batteries. <sup>28</sup> In late February the Continental Congress created the Middle and Southern military departments, the latter under the command of General Charles Lec. <sup>29</sup> A British naval squadron under Sir Peter Parker reached Charleston on June 4,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>See <u>South Carolina and American General Gazette</u>. September 1, 1775, for early military preparations. Henry Laurens reported that "the little ships of war which were lying in Rebellion Road are all now going out to sea as I am told, I believe in search of provision." Laurens to James Laurens, January 6, 1776, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u> 11:7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, January 1, 1776, <u>Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 12:29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>376</sup>The houses in Charles Town which had been emptied of their owners and their furniture are now made use of as barracks for the country rifle-men and other militia." Henry Laurens to William Manning, February 27, 1776, Papers of Henry Laurens. 11:122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>Minutes of the South Carolina Council of Safety, January 8-9, 1776, Naval Documents of the American Revolution, 3:686-687, 705; South Carolina and American General Garcetta, January 19, 1776; Thomas Lyach to Goorge Washington, January 16, 1776, in W.W. Abbot, ed., The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series. 6 volts, to due Charlottesville VA: Undversity Press of Vignita, 1985-3, 3:110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Congress created the departments on February 27 and appointed officers for the March 1, 1776. See <u>Journals of the Continental Congress</u>, 4:132-133, 157, 174, 180-181, and John Hancock to George Washington, March 6, 1776, in <u>Papers of George Washington</u>: Revolutionary War Series, 3:415.

1776, and crossed the sand bar into the harbor three days later. Lee arrived with

Continental troops to take command of the city's defense the very next day. Lee found

South Carolina troops stationed at Fort Johnson on James Island, on Sullivan's Island,
and on the bay in Charleston. The general thought the city's defenses poorly

constructed, and he ordered the provincial troops to abandon the unfinished fort on

Sullivan's Island commanded by William Moultrie. Governor Rutledge refused, and the

troops stayed on the island. Thomas Pinckney, at Fort Johnson on James Island, reported
that "our men are healthy and very cheerful, so that I flatter myself if they venture in we
shall be able to give a very good account of them." Richard Hutson boasted that "the fort
will be tendered to them at the mouth of the cannon. We are preparing for the most

vigorous resistance in our power." Charlestonians dug in and waited.

The attack on the city and its successful defense had a three-pronged effect: it united immediately Charlesson's divided political factions (if only temporarity) and gave new life to the resistance movement, it made Carolina conservatives more receptive to complete separation from Britain, and it gave Southerners a false sense of security about Charleston's invincibility. The British naval and infantry assault of June 28, 1776, ended

<sup>\*</sup>Sir Peter Parker to Philip Stevens, July 9, 1776, ADM 1/486, Admirals' Dispatches, Admiralty and Secretariat Papers, Public Record Office, London, microfilm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>William Thomas Bulger Jr., "The British Expedition To Charleston, 1779-1780," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1957, 13, 15; Ramsay, <u>History of South Carolina 1670-1808</u>, 1:270.

<sup>4&</sup>lt;sup>th</sup>Thomas Pinckney to Harriott Horry, June 5, 1776, in Jack L. Cross, ed., "Letters of Thomas Pinckney, 1775-1780," South Carolina Historical Magazzine 58 (January 1957): 67; Richard Hutson to Isaac Hayne, June 9, 1776, Richard Hutson Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society.

in unqualified disaster. Any ship hoping to reach the city had to pass through the northern part of the harbor and come under the guns of the unfinished fort on Sullivan's Island. Parker failed to get a single ship past the fort, while British infantry troops remained stranded on Long Island, separated from Sullivan's Island by a breach of water seven feet deep. Charles Lee told George Washington that he had never experienced a more intense attack, and that the South Carolinians on Sullivan's Island 'acted like Romans in the third century. Charles Lee told witness confessed it was 'almost incredible to think that a palmetto log fort with rwelve guas and three hundred men should make such havoc with so formidable a fleet of British vessels. The British attack of 1776 would

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>This was due to the shoal extending from James Island into the center of the harbor. Fort Sumter was built on this shoal. See Bulger, "British Expedition to Charleston," 15.

<sup>&</sup>quot;The British sounded the Breach between the islands at low tide. At high tide it could not be crossed. Sir Peter Parker later maintained that "if the troops could have cooperated on this attack His Majesty would have been in possession of Sullivan's Island." Peter Parker to Philip Stevens, July 9, 1776, ADM 1/486, 64-70. Long Island is now the Isle of Palms.

<sup>45</sup>Charles Lee to George Washington, July 1, 1776, in <u>Papers of George Washington</u>: Revolutionary War Series, 5:169.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Extract of a letter from Charleston, July 3, 1776, Pennsylvania Evening Post. July 23, 1776, quotein InSvaul Decuments of the American Revolution, 5:093-906. For more detailed accounts of the Battle of Sullivan's Island, see McCrady, South Carolina In Revolution, 1775-1780, 128-162; Bulger, "British Expedition to the Surieston, 1785, "Enc. Benglish Expedition to the Southerston, 1785, "Enc. Roboton, "The Expedition to the Southern Colonies, 1775-1776," English Historical Review 66 (October 1951): 535-560; Peter Parker to Philip Stevens, 1949, 9, 1776, ADM 1486, 6-470, Wallet J. Farser, Ir., Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern Civil Colombia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 148-150; Farser, English, Elisation and Evitious: "Poor Singlic Charleston Town" During the American Revolution Second ed. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 148-150; Farser, English, Elisation and Estensions: "Poor Singlic Charles Town" During the American Revolution Second ed. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 148-176. Pareack, Elisation Septement Vision Fibritish The British The British The British The Proceedings of the Processing Process of the Processing Process of the Processing Process

not be the last attempt to conquer the Southern metropolis, and the next two attacks applied the lessons learned from the first. The invasions of 1779 and 1780 would be carefully planned and more successful.

The naval bombardment of 1776 galvanized Charleston radicals and moderates and made conservatives more receptive to total independence from Great Britain. One correspondent noted that "the spirits of our people are higher than at any period. I believe there are few among us who have an idea of giving up the cause, happen what will."

believe there are few among us who have an idea of giving up the cause, happen what will. "To south Carolina's representatives in the Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence reluctantly, unsure how conservative Carolinians back home would react. Heretofore, Charleston conservatives had rejected any notion of independence. When Christopher Cadaden returned from Philadelphia with a copy of Thomas Paine's Common Sense in early 1776, his proposals for a complete separation from Britain met harsh and swift condemnation from the Provincial Congress. "Conservatives contended that only extraordinary events had driven royal government from the colony and these circumstances dictated the necessity for a new constitution. It would serve, as John Rutledge argued, only "till an accommodation of the unhappy

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>Campaign in the Carolinas</u>, 1780-1782 (Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 20-25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>William Fleming to Thomas Jefferson, July 27, 1776, in Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., <u>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson</u>, 26 vols. to date (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 1:474-475.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>Henry Laurens to Georgia Authorities, February 13, 1776, in "Papers of the Second Council of Safety of the Revolutionary Party in South Carolina, November 1775-March 1776," South Carolina Historical Magazine 4 (April 1903): 87-88. Laurens nevertheless passed on a copy of Common Sense to Whice in Georgia.

differences can be obtained, and that event is still desired."49 The Declaration of Independence, therefore, coincided fortuitously with the British attack on Charleston, and the city greeted the news "amidst loud acclamations of thousands."50 Charlestonians heard the Declaration read publicly in Broad Street and in front of the Exchange and celebrated by firing the cannon on the Cooper River bastions.51 The Reverend William Tennent rejoiced that "no event has seemed to diffuse more general satisfaction among the people. This seems to be designed as a most import epocha in the history of South Carolina."52 Conservative Charlestonians watched these events with heavy hearts and mixed emotions. Henry Laurens described the scene as "serious, important, and awful." and confessed that he felt like "a dutiful son thrust by the hand of violence out of a father's house into the wide world." Though Charleston remained free from military attack for almost three years after 1776, independence brought little peace or security. Celebration soon gave way to rancorous political conflict over constitutional revision. religious freedom, equal representation, greater scarcity of goods and provision, rampant inflation, disrupted trade, rumors of impending invasions, and devastating fires and riots.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup>South Carolina and American General Gazette, April 17, 1776; McDonough, "Gadsden and Laurens," 283.

South Carolina Delegates to John Rutledge, July 9, 1776, Letters of Delegates to Congress, 4-420-421; South Carolina and American General Gazette, August 2, 1776; McCrody, South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780, 177; Rumssy, History of South Carolina, 1670-1808, 1288-289; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, August 14, 1776, Papers of Henry Laurens, 11-228.

<sup>51</sup>Weir, Colonial South Carolina, 332.

<sup>57</sup> Weir, "A Most Important Epocha." The Coming of the Revolution in South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 77.

Charleston liberals, led by Christopher Gadsden, utilized both the British invasion and independence to justify their efforts to give South Carolina's government a more permanent design. Delegates began debating revisions to the temporary constitution of 1776 in the newly elected General Assembly of September 1776. Religious dissenters and backcountry representatives, emboldened by the British attack, sought more extensive and permanent changes. Defarteston conservatives, led by the Rutledges, resisted any alterations to the existing government, arguing throughout the deliberations that the constitution of 1776 contained no provision for amendment. Consequently, when the legislature finally approved a new state constitution in March 1778, President John Rutledge resigned his post rather than give his sanction to the new government it created. Simultaneously, however, pragmatic lowcountry leaders realized that they would have to make significant political and religious concessions in order to gain backcountry support both for their government and for their cause against British tyranny.

The constitution of 1778 demonstrates again the tenuous grip of the lowcountry elite upon the course and direction of the Revolution. Charleston conservatives would never have assented to its passage had the calamities of war not forced them to do so, and they surely knew that privileges once lost could never be regained. The disestablishment of the Anglican Church emerged as the most radical measure, but other changes rankled

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>William Edwin Hemphill et. al., eds., <u>Journals of the General Assembly and House of Representatives</u>, <u>1776-1780</u> The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 143.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>South Carolina and American General Gazette, March 12, 1778; John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, March 16, 1778, Papers of Henry Laurens, 13:2-8.

the old guard as well. Democratic features of the new constitution altered the Privy
Council, replaced the Legislative Council with a Senate directly elected by the voters,
removed the president's veto power, lowered suffrage qualifications, and pledged to
reapportion the legislature every seven years. Most ominous for Charlestonians, the
constitution substituted the term "seat of government" for "Charles Town," with the clear
implication that the capital could one day be moved. John Rutledge sounded strangely
democratic by protesting that the Assembly had overstepped its authority in making such
sweeping changes without calling a special constitutional convention. In reality,
Rutledge objected to the document's democratic elements, Charleston's loss of power,
and the reduction of the governors's powers. He thought the latter reflected on his

The constitution of 1778, though more radical than its predecessor, still did not entirely satisfy all factions. Charleston's artisans disliked it because it appeared that

performance in that office and considered the change a personal insult.55

<sup>55</sup> The text of the constitution of 1778 is in Thorpe, ed., Federal and State Constitutions, 6:3248-3257. See also Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 35-43; Douglass, Rebels and Democrats, 43-44; Carl J. Vipperman, The Rise of Rawlins Lowndes, 1721-1800 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1978), 202-205; Meleney, Public Life of Aedanus Burke, 41-49; Clow, "Edward Rutledge," 127-133; McDonough, "Gadsden and Laurens," 312-318; Weir, Colonial South Carolina, 333; James Haw, "The Rutledges, The Continental Congress, and Independence," South Carolina Historical Magazine 94 (October 1993): 250-251. Haw's article is especially useful on the discussion of John Rutledges' supposed continued desire for an accommodation with Great Britain as his reason for vetoing the constitution. Haw correctly points out that the reconciliation Rutledge wished for was simply the negotiation of a successful peace treaty between America and Britain, not a reunion. Such a position would have been untenable in even the most conservative Whig by 1778. For the changing relationship between the executive and the legislature, see Christopher F. Lee, "The Transformation of the Executive in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina," South Carolina Historical Magazine 93 (April 1992); 85-100.

moderates and conservatives would still dominate the government, especially after cautious Rawlins Lowndes (nicknamed at one point "Rawlinus Postponator") replaced Rutledge as governor. And though the backcountry now controlled about 40 percent of the legislature and 39 percent of the senate, uncountry representatives remained appry that the lower house had not been reannortioned. With Charleston controlling 46 percent of the senate, the balance of power in that body lay with the outlying lowcountry parishes of Beaufort and Georgetown. The new constitution also required the presence of more legislators for a quorum, making it difficult to conduct business without backcountry members present. And while the constitution lowered suffrage qualifications somewhat it raised the requirements for officeholding.56 And though religious dissenters rejoiced at the overthrow of the established church, "the Christian Protestant Religion" replaced Anglicanism as the established religion of the state. Only Protestants could now serve in government, and the constitution prohibited ministers-such as dissenter William Tennent--from holding office. Tennent had played a prominent role in shepherding religious toleration through the Assembly.

The attack on the established church represented nothing less than an assault on Charleston's aristocratic preeminence and privilege within the state. The Church of England had been the established church in South Carolina since the first decade of the eighteenth century, and it dominated lowcountry South Carolina. As in tidewater Virginia, the church served as a bulwark of gentry beliefs, providing religious

Walsh, Charleston's Sons of Liberty, 82; Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 40-41;Weir, Colonial South Carolina, 333; McDonough, "Gadsden and Laurens," 315-317.

reinforcement for the ordered, hierarchical, and deferential society of the Charleston elite. 

The mid-1730s, Presbyterian and Buptist dissenters began settling in backcountry South Carolina, bringing with them an aggressive, emotionally charged revivalistic religion. 

Enthusiastic dissenters like Baptist minister Oliver Hart attacked nearly every facet of the dominant gentry culture, including the doctrines and practices of the Anglican church. Hart railed against "our merry gentry, who delight so much in frolicking and dancing" and condemned their "filthiness, foolish talking, jesting and suchlike things."

Hugh Alison likewise attacked aristocracy and inherited privilege when he preached that "to be sprung from illustrious progenitors gives no real worth or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>For Virginia, see especially Rhys Issae, <u>The Transformation of Virginia</u>, 1740-1790 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982). Issae is concerned with the rise of popular evangelicalism in Virginia and the creation of an evangelical \*counterculture\* which undermined the dominant gentry culture and eventually broke the religious hegemony of the established Anglican church.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Brinsfield, Religion and Politics in Colonial South Carolina. 16-38; S. Charles Bolton, Southern Anglicinatur. The Church of Pendiand in Colonial South Carolina (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1982); David T. Morgan, "The Great Awskening in the Carolinas and Georgia; 1740-1775; "BD. disseration, University of North Carolina, 1968; David T. Morgan, "The Great Awskening in South Carolina, 1740-1775; "South Adlamic Quarterfy Of Austurna [1971; 59-566; Haud W. Gardner, "The Dissenting Sects on the Southern Colonial Frontier, 1720-1770," Ph. D. disseration, University of Kanssa, 1969; William Howland Karney III. "Alexander Gardne and Ecoper Whitefield: The Significance of Revivalism in South Carolina, 1738-1741," South Carolina Historical Magazing, 71 (January 1970): 1-16.

<sup>3</sup>ºOliver Hart, Danzeing Exploded: A Sermon Showing the Unlawfulness, Sinfulness, and Bad Consequences of Balls. Assemblies, and Dances in General Delivered in Charlestown, South Carolina. March 22, 1778 (Charlestown SC: David Bruce, 1778), 3-4; Durward Turrentine Stokes, "The Clergy of the Carolinas and the American Revolution," Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1968, 219.

excellency to any man." The established church in South Carolina gained few converts in the backcountry, and by the Revolution Anglicans had been relegated to a small but powerful minority concentrated in the lowcountry. Thus by attacking the privileges of the established church, dissenters implicitly challenged the aristocratic social structure of the Charleston elite.

Charleston dissenters William Tennent, Oliver Hart, and backcountry Baptist Richard Furman led the efforts to disestablish the Anglican Church. After the adoption of the constitution of 1776. Hart and Furman invited ministers of all denominations to meet at the Baptist Church at the High Hills of Santee to draft a petition to the legislature calling for disestablishment. Dissenters drew parallels between compulsory support of a church they did not attend and the colonial resistance to imperial taxes, and thousands of backcountry supporters signed the petition. The movement to disestablish the Anglican church became part of the process of constitutional reform in 1776-1777. Christopher Gadsden supported the dissenters' position and introduced the petition in the legislature in January 1777. Charleston Congregationalist William Tennent spoke forcefully in behalf of the petition, arguing that religious establishments infringed upon religious liberty. No legislature, he argued, had the right to interfere with and tax the "conscience of men." "While you are contending for the rights of mankind with one of the greatest powers upon earth," he asked, "will you leave your own Constitution marked with injustice and oppression?" He challenged the Charleston elite to "yield to the mighty

<sup>6&</sup>quot;Hugh Alison, The Faithful Servant of Christ Honoured and Rewarded: A Sermon Sacred to the Memory of the Reverend William Tennent (Charlestown SC: David Bruce, 1777), 23.

current of American freedom and glory" and vote to strip the Anglican Church of the privileges it enjoyed at the expense of religious freedom.<sup>64</sup>

The new constitution of 1778 already weakened Charleston's traditional political power, and the loss of an established church would be a severe blow to the city's cultural autonomy as well. Like the Commons House of Assembly, the Anglican Church acted as an integral component of elite hegemony, and dissenters would need to muster more than Tennent's eloquence to defeat lowcountry supporters of establishment. The Charleston elite openly divided over the issue. Gladsden, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Edward Rutledge, and William Henry Drayton supported the petition, while Rawlins Lowndes, Richard Hutson, Charles Pinckney, and John Rutledge supported the Anglican church, arguing that establishment should be continued even without taxation.<sup>40</sup> Many Charleston aristocrats feared that maintaining establishment could stoke the fires of backcountry loyalism, even though Dissenting ministers overwhelmingly supported the Revolutionary movement. Without religious concessions, the lowcountry might stand alone against the

My Illiam Tennent, Mr. Tennent's Speech on the Dissenting Petition, Delivered in the House of Assembly, Charles-Town, South Carolina, January 11, 1777 (Charlestown SC: Peter Timothy, 1777), 6-7, 17, 28; Samuel A. Lilly, "The Culture of Revolutionary Charleston," Ph.D. dissertation, Miami University, 1972, 125-126.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Zahniser, Charles Cotesworth Pinchers, 50-51: Godbold and Woody, Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution. 167-168; Frances Leigh Williams, A Founding Family: The Pinchers of South Carolina (New York: Harcourt Brese Jovanovich, 1978), 99-100; Richard Hutson to Isase Hayne, January 18, 1777, Richard Hutson Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society, A.S. Salley Jr., ed., Col. William Hill's Memoirs of the Revolution (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1921), 30; Brinsfeld, Religion and Politics in Colonial South Carolina, 116.

British threat.<sup>60</sup> The need for political unity finally triumphed, and the bill for disestablishment passed unanimously. The Anglican Church would now have to survive on its own, no longer supported by evangelical and backcountry taxes.

The Revolutionary movement had delivered another blow to Charleston aristocratic begemony. The disestablishment of the Anglican church in 1778 demonstrates the speed with which "outsiders"—in this case religious dissenters—capitalized on the unprecedented opportunities provided by the upheavals of war to strike a blow against entrenched elite power. Members of Charleston's Congregational Church credited the "the glorious American revolution" for releasing them from the chains of established religion and for placing "religious liberties on the broad bottom of universal equality." Oliver Hart rejoiced that "religion is set free here," while others hoped that converts would flock to evangelical denominations to hear the more dynamic and popular dissenting preachers. William Tennent even argued that disestablishment would enhance economic prosperity, opening the state to energetic and entrepreneurial

GStokes, "Clergy of the Carolinas and the American Revolution," 181, 211, 227; "Historical Sketch of the First Baptist Church," Yearbook, City of Charleston, 1881 (Charleston SC: News and Courier Book Presses, 1881), 317-319; Bolton, Southern Anglicanism, 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Independent or Congregational (Circular) Church, Charleston, Records, 1695-1935, WPA Transcripts, 1940, South Caroliniana Library, 146-147, copied from original in possession of Congregational Church, Charleston.

<sup>65</sup> Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, March 24, 1778, Oliver Hart Papers, South Caroliniana Library, Oliver Hart to Richard Furman, February 12, 1777, Richard Furman Correspondence, Special Collections Library, Furman University, Greenville, South Carolina, microfilm, South Caroliniana Library.

dissenters. \*\* Charleston lawyer Edward Rutledge, however, remained less sanguine.

"Religion," he wrote, "is now become the subject of dispute and will I am afraid play the
Devil with us.\*\* The Revolution forced rapid and extensive changes upon Charleston's
elite, and lost privileges would prove difficult to regain. Indeed, just twelve years later
the Constitution of 1790 established complete religious freedom and separation of church
and state.

The Revolution's transforming effect upon the power of Charleston's traditional leaders perhaps manifested itself most clearly in the economic life of the city. The elite proved to be as impotent in protecting the city's once-thriving economy from the ravages of war as they had been in preserving the established church. Despite hopes that a more stable and permanent government would steady the erratic economy, Charleston nevertheless suffered from scarcity, inflation, "avarice, and extortion." A British military invasion looked almost tame by comparison. The closure of Charleston's regular avenue of commerce with Great Britain in 1775 forced many import/export merchants out of business altogether. Continued business simply because too risky for many merchants. The British navy blockaded American ports, and privateers preyed on American

<sup>66</sup>Tennent, Mr. Tennent's Speech, 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Edward Rutledge to Robert Morris, January 23, 1777, quoted in Godbold and Woody, <u>Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution</u>, 168.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>John Wells Jr. to Henry Laurens, April 20, 1778, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u>, 13:161-162.

shipping.\*\* Some tradesmen retired rather than risk their capital, but many enterprising Charleston merchants opened new avenues of trade with the French, the Dutch, and their colonies in the West Indies.\*\* The flow of imports slowed to a trickle and at times ceased altogether, but when goods did slip through the blockade they sold for outrageous prices. Charleston, like Baltimore, became the commercial lifeline for states as far north as New Jersey after the British captured New York in October 1776 and Philadelphia in September 1777.\*\* Many merchants gambled, took risks, and made fortunes almost overnight. John Adams marveled that "South Carolina seems to display a spirit of enterprise in trade superior to any other state.\*\* Tindeed, Charleston merchants during the early phase of the Revolution exhibited the same "drive and flexibility, the tolerance for

Ongress opened colonial ports to ships of all nations except Great Britain on April 6, 1776. See Thomas Pinckney to Harriott Horry, undated, "Letters of Thomas Pinckney," 30.

O'Unknown to Gabriel Manigault, March 10, 1777, Manigault Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, 20th Adams to James Warren, April 6, 1777, John Bondfield to the Commissioners, May 8, 1778, in Robert J. Taylor, ed., The Adams Press of Historical March 1978, 1878, 1878, 1878, 1878, 1878, 1878, 1878, 1878, 1878, 1979, 5, 1435, 699-100; Bondfield to the American Commissioners, October 3, 1778, Papers of Benjamin Franklin, 27:492-493; McCrady, South Carolina In the Revolution, 1775-1780, 212-220.

<sup>&</sup>quot;See Captain Robert Fanshaw to Vice-Admiral Viscount Howe, February 13, 178: "Charlestow was the great emportum of the southern colonies to which foreigners bringing supplies chiefly resorted; that from thence a considerable fleet of merchantmen. was preparing osal and that to complete the lading of this fleet some hundreds of wagons were constantly employed bringing the produce of the country so far distant as Virginia. Such circumstances induced me to think that that place required the utmost attention." Decuments of the American Revolution, 15-46; Ramsay, History of South Carollan (167):1808. 1299. Browne, Baltimore in the Nation, 9-11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>Adams to James Warren, April 6, 1777, <u>Papers of John Adams</u>, 5:145.

risk, [and] roving quest for new markets," that characterized Philadelphia businessmen during the Revolutionary era. <sup>73</sup>

Charleston's import trade rose and fell between 1776 and 1780 depending upon the amount of British naval activity in Southern waters. Merchants carried on a flourishing trade in 1777 after the unsuccessful British assault on Sullivar's Island. <sup>54</sup>
British ships reappeared in menacing numbers during 1778, however, and trading slowed again after the British captured Savannah in December 1778. <sup>59</sup> Both non-exportation and British depredations affected Charleston's export trade. Enterprising Charleston merchants found alternative markets for Carollina rice, indigo, and naval stores in France, Holland. and Savain. <sup>58</sup> Wholesale commodity prices, though only partially available for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup>Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise, 344, 355.

<sup>&</sup>quot;See Christopher Gadsden to Thomas Mumford, February 19, 1777, in Richard Walsh, ed. The Writings of Christopher Gadsden, 1746-1869 (Columbia Sci. University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 120; John Adams to James Warren, April 6, 1777, Pagesar of John Adams, 1447, Richard Henry Lee to the Governor Of Virginia, November 24, 1777, in James Curtis Ballagh, ed. The Letters of Richard Henry Lee. 2 vols. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 1356

<sup>&</sup>quot;See for instance Joseph Kenshaw to Henry Laurens, February 16, 1778: "Our roth sab een blocked up for a considerable length of time by two or three British cruisers, and some privateers out of [St.] Augustine," John Rutledge to Henry Laurens, February 16, 1778: "February 16, 1778: "Fe

<sup>&</sup>quot;Some merchants apparently even skired around non-exportation laws. William Ancrum to Campbell, Hooper and Company, September 5, 1778: "The embargo prevents the exportation of rice, notwithstanding I believe some small parcels are shipped off clandestinely and with some risk." William Ancrum Letterbook, South Carolinians Library. The loss of Carolina nasult stores especially but the British navy. See Lord

the years 1775-1780, do not seem to have fluctuated as wildly as the price of imported goods. Rice sold for the same price in September 1777 that it brought in the spring of  $1775.7^{\circ}$ 

The disruptions in the normal avenues of commerce made goods and money scarce in Charleston and caused prices to rise to excessive heights. William Ancrum, a wealthy merchant with the firm of Ancrum, Lance, and Lococck, wrote in late 1777 that "the loss attending our exports is sufficiently made up by the profits on our imports, all kinds of dry goods selling at most exorbitant prices." By April 1778 Ancrum advised Camden storekeeper Eli Kershaw that "the miscarriage of our fleet and the many vessels that have been lately taken" meant that prices would remain high. In September of 1778 Ancrum complained that "trade is remarkably dull here at present," but a month later umors of an imminent British invasion sent prices soaring again. Speculators snatched up available supplies and provisions to sell to the army. Six months later trade had slowed again. "Of late very few arrivals and no wagons as usual coming to town, little or no business is done in the shopkeeping way." The vicisitiates of the market allowed one Loyalist farmer in early 1778 to sell provisions in Charleston at a profit of 300

George Germain to General Sir Henry Clinton, August 5, 1778, <u>Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 15:177-178.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>George Rogers Taylor, "Wholesale Commodity Prices at Charleston, South Carolina, 1732-1791," <u>Journal of Economic and Business History</u> 4 (1932): 366n.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>William Ancrum to Sam Chollet, October 6, 1777, Ancrum to Eli Kershaw, April 1, 1778, Ancrum to John Chesnut, October 17, 1778, April 28, 1779, William Ancrum Letterbook, South Caroliniana Library. See also Robert Williams to unknown, September 18, 1778, Manigault Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

percent. \*\*Rampant inflation made a bad situation intolerable. The Provincial Congress twice authorized printing paper currency in 1775, and the new General Assembly continued the policy after adopting the constitution of 1776. The inflation rate rose from 135 percent in 1777 to 8,114 percent by June 1780.\*\* One former British official wryly observed that "their money [is] so depreciated that it has become a subject of melancholy ridicule, even to themselves.\*\*

Rampant inflation, scarcity, and forestalling educed eithe attempts to manage
Charleston's wartime economy. Citizens complained repeatedly, and Charleston's
elected leaders proved incapable of dealing effectively with mounting problems. If The
Reverend Oliver Hart of Charleston's First Baptist Church protested that "we have been
buying and selling and preying on each other like vultures.\*40 Charleston remained
unincorporated until 1783 and city leaders thus lacked sufficient political social or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup>Alexander Chesney Journal, 8, Public Record Office, Northern Ireland, photocopy, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>176.</sup> Robert Higgins, "The South Carolina Revolutionary Debt and Its Holders, 176-1780," South Carolina Historical Magazine 72 (January 1971): 15-29, Ferrari, "Artisans of the South," 121. According to George Rogers Taylor, a large supply of Continental paper currency arrived in Charleston in the fail of 1777, and from that time on currency depreciation was continuous. Taylor, "Wholesale Commodity Prices," 366.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>James Simpson to Sir Henry Clinton, August 20, 1779, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Series I, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>See South Carolina and American General Gazette, January 19, August 21, 1776, April 24, May 1, May 15, November 20, 1777, February 19, 1778, January 19, 1780; Gazette of the State of South Carolina. April 9, May 5, May 12, 1777.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup>Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, February 16, 1779, Oliver Hart Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

economic institutions to meet the overwhelming challenges of war. The lack of a strong urban government had never been more glaring, and city commissioners made only ineffectual and feeble attempts to address Charleston's difficulties. For instance, local laws prohibited slaves from selling goods at prices unauthorized by their owners. Magistrates threatened to prosecute any free black or slave who charged higher prices, but effective enforcement proved difficult.44 Complaints continued throughout the war about the lack of any systematic attempt to control monopolizing and forestalling, and outraged consumers repeatedly clamored for stricter regulation of Charleston's markets. "Poplicola" demanded regulated prices to curb the "selfishness of mankind." Freedom. he argued, did not entail capitalizing on scarcity by charging outrageous prices. To do so would "defeat the very principle which we are now contending for." Another "Citizen" asked, "is not every part of the community and their offspring to reap the equal advantage of the glorious struggle?"46 The great fire that swept through a large part of the city on January 15, 1778, served to magnify existing social and economic problems. One local merchant reported that "the distresses of many, before very great, now becomes almost insupportable."47 The high price of artisan labor meant that many of the fire's victims could not even afford estimates for repairs, even if the scarce materials they needed had

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>South Carolina and American General Gazette, May 1, May 15, 1777; Gazette of the State of South Carolina, May 5, May 12, 1777.

<sup>85</sup> South Carolina and American General Gazette, August 21, 1776.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup>Ibid., February 19, 1778.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>William Ancrum to Parker Quince, January 28, 1778, William Ancrum Letterbook, South Caroliniana Library.

been available. For many citizens the fire proved to be a crippling blow, creating "us complete a scene of woe and horror as the human imagination can picture." The fire compounded the problems of the city's poor, who complained that they suffered unduly from high prices for food, clothing, and fire wood. Charleston's church wurdens, responsible for administering to the poor, had to borrow money from the state legislature every year from 1776 to 1780. No poor tax had been collected in Charleston since 1774. Dr. George Logan finally told purish officials in late 1779 that he could not "possibly attend the poor of the parish after this year" because scarcity had driven up the price of medicine to exorbitant rates. <sup>80</sup> On at least one occasion citizens took matters into their own hands. In July 1778 angry Charlestonians smashed the windows of a merchant named Fitzimmons for raising the price of candles. <sup>80</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup>John Wells Jr. to Henry Laurens, January 23, 1778, Parens of Henry Laurens, 12-332. See also <u>South Carolina and American General Gazette</u>, January 29, 1778; Ralph Izard to the American Commissioners, April 29, 1778, [Oliver Hart Dary, January 15, 1778, Coliver Hart Dary, January 15, 1778.
26:375; Oliver Hart Dary, South Carolinania Library; Samuel G. Stoney, ed., "The Great Fire of 1778 Seen Through Contemporary Letters," <u>South Carolinan Historical Manazine</u> 64
(January 1963): 22-26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Minutes of Vestry Meeting, August 7, 1776, April 1, 1777, May 26, 1778, August 3, 1779, December 8, 1779, Protestatte Episcopal Church, St. Philips, Charleston, Records, 1732-1910, WPA Transcripts, 1939, 141, 144-145, 151, 159, 162, South Caroliniana Library, copied from the original in the possession of St. Philips Church, Charleston.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup>John Lewis Gervaits to Henry Laurens, July 6, 1778, John Lewis Gervaits and Henry Laurens Correspondence, South Carolina Historical Society. This was probably Christopher Fitzsimons, who later signed a proclamation in 1780 congratulating British officers Henry Clinion and Marion Aruthunot. Proceedings of Christoson. Rev Robert W. Barnwell H.; "Addressers of Cirtinon and Arbuthnot," <u>Proceedings of the South Carolina Guntol Historical Association</u>, 1939, 44. On February 26, 1782, the South Carolina General Assembly businked Fitzsimons from the state and confiscant dis property. See

The city's artisans continued to challenge elite authority, as they had in pre-war years, and carried on their long-standing economic battle against merchants who flooded the market (albeit sporadically during these years) with imported goods. Even during the war artisans continued to propel the elite toward more radical measures, demanding not only political independence but freedom from British economic tyranny as well. They especially condemned the many merchants who imported British manufactured goods from the West Indian islands, extending even after independence the competition from British industries. 91 Not surprisingly, many of the city's craftsmen became staunch supporters of the oath of allegiance passed in 1778. The previous oath of 1776 applied only to former royal officials, but the act signed by President Rawlins Lowndes on March 28. 1778. required all males in South Carolina over the age of sixteen to swear allegiance to the state. Charlestonians had thirty days in which to comply or lose the right to hold office, vote, bring suit, bear arms, serve on juries, buy, sell or hold property, or pursue a trade. Anyone who refused to sign and left the state could, upon returning, be charged with treason and sentenced to death. The city's artisans enthusiastically supported strict enforcement of the oath because it compelled Loyalist-leaning merchants who imported British goods either to support the Whig cause or leave the state.

When Lowndes extended the deadline to June 5 (at the recommendation of the Continental Congress), the artisans exploded in protest. They called for mass meetings

Ella Pettit Levett, "Loyalism in Charleston, 1761-1784," Ibid., 1936, 12-14; A.S. Salley Jr., ed., Journal of the House of Representatives of South Carolina, January 8, 1782–February 26, 1782 (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1916), 27, 32.

<sup>91</sup>Walsh, Charleston's Sons of Liberty, 80.

and took to the streets to denounce what they considered to be a preferential and treasonous act. Vice President Christopher Gadsden broke ranks with his artisanal colleagues and supported Lowndes, severing a relationship between Gadsden and the mechanics that began with the Stamp Act crisis of 1765. Despite Gadsden's opposition, artisans and other staunch Whigs prevented Lowndes's extension from taking effect. After this episode of political defiance, Gadsden, like many members of the elite before him, turned considerably more moderate and became a staunch defender of the status quo. The incident is suggestive of the nominal power that aristocratic leaders exercised during the war and the feeble grip they maintained upon political and economic events in Charleston during the Revolution.<sup>55</sup>

Charleston's economic condition between 1776 and 1780 thus contradicts the notion that the elite remained firmly in control of Revolutionary events. Planters, lawyers, and merchants certainly dominated elective office, but the exigencies of war weakened the ability of those institutions either to check or contain the turbulent and overwhelming forces of revolution. War distributed the fruits and sacrifices of independence unevenly throughout the community and defield elite attempts at control or regulation. Some merchants grew wealthy in the scramble for goods, planters faced an

Tor the crisis over the Oath of Allegiance, see Christopher Gadsden to Peter Irmothy, June 3, 1778, Gadsden to Hülliam Henry Dryston, Writings of Christopher Gadsden, 130-134, McDonough, "Gadsden and Laurens," 223-330, Vipperman, Rise of Rasulins Louendes, 209-213; McCrady, South Carolina in the Revolution, 175-1780, 266-277, Walsh, Charlesson's Sons of Liberts, \$8-87, John Wells Jr. to Henry Laurens, April 20, 1778, June 10, 1778, Papers of Henry Laurens, 131-62, 435-441; South Carolina and American General Gassette, April 27, June 11, 1778; Gazette of the State of South Carolina, June 24, 1778. Gadsden did not support the postwar artisanal protests, as we will see in chapter four.

uncertain export market, while less affluent citizens often starved. No one could entirely escape the effects of rampant inflation, exorbitant prices both for goods and labor, scarcity, speculation, or forestalling.

The war's effects upon the city's large black population proved most troubling of all for urban whites. If solutions to economic problems bedeviled Charleston's traditional leaders throughout the war, controlling Charleston's slaves during the upheaval proved to be altogether impossible. The chaos of war offered innumerable and unprecedented opportunities for slaves to resist and rebel, decreasing white authority while increasing black autonomy. Slave resistance in the face of white powerlessness proved to be one of the most unsettling aspects of the war for white South Carolinians. Even before the war Charleston slaves possessed a great deal of autonomy. They regularly hired out their own time, operated businesses, worked in a multitude of skilled and unskilled positions, sold and traded in the city's marketplaces, dominated the fishing trade, worshiped in city churches, and congregated in city taverns and dramshops, all with little or no white supervision. The city had long acted as a magnet for runaways because of the

<sup>&</sup>quot;South Carolina Gazette, November 9, 1767, May 9, 1768, January 25, 1770, August 27, 1772, September 17, 1772, September 24, 1767, May 24, 1768, South Carolina and American Gazette, January 29, 1768, July 1, 1768, Torgood recent accounts of slavery in colonial and Revolutionary Charleston and South Carolina, see Peter H. Wood, "Liberty Is News" 47, Affected American Charleston Brougeles in the Yearn Before White Independence," in Affect F. Young, ed., Beyond The American Revolution Explorations in the History of American Reduction, "Black Like in Fighteenth-Century, Charleston," Pengagettises in American History, New Series 1 (1984): 187-232, 1700 in 1880, "William and Culture: The Task System and the Vold of Lowcounty Slacks, 1700 in 1880," William and Mary Quarsely: 19 (Georber 1982): 565-599; Morgan, "Word and Mary Quarsely: 19 (Georber 1982): 565-599; Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcounty, 1706-1810," in The Berlin and Recoald Hoffman, eds., "Pollack Society in the Lowcounty, 1706-1810," in The Berlin and Recoald Hoffman, eds., "Response of the Revolution of the Property of the Revolution of the Revolution and Property of the Revolution of the Revoluti

opportunity and need for casual labor.94 Slaves in Charleston quickly sensed the division and disorder in the white community during the Revolutionary movement and capitalized on the confusion. The extant correspondence of white slaveowners during the war is filled with complaints about disobedient and runaway slaves. Henry Laurens told his brother in London in June 1775 that he had warned his brother's slaves to "behave with great circumspection in these dangerous times" but by the following January was forced to admit that "your negroes in some measure govern themselves."95 Other slaveowners voiced similar complaints. Frightened planters spread rumors throughout the lowcountry that the British planned to incite slave insurrections and that already slaves on plantations had refused to work, taken up arms and murdered their masters. Royal Governor Lord William Campbell reported to London that the rumors had created an atmosphere of near hysteria among Charleston whites: "words cannot express the flame occasioned amongst all ranks and degrees.\*96 With the outbreak of hostilities, many of these rumors became reality. Slaves disobeyed white overseers, refused to work, ran away from plantations.

Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 83-142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup>South Carolina Gazette. September 20, 1770; South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, June 21, 1768, August 9, 1768, August 30, 1768, October 25, 1768, May 2, 1769; Gazette of the State of South Carolina, June 16, 1777.

<sup>95</sup> Laurens to James Laurens, June 7, 1775, January 6, 1776, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u> 10:162-163, 11:5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup>Mr. Millegen's Report of the state of South Carolina, September 15, 1775, and William Campbell to "My Lord," August 31, 1775, SCBPRO 35:231-232, 192-193.

and fled to join the British. 97 Many fled the countryside and came to Charleston in hones of escaping to British ships. In the fall of 1775 reports reached the South Carolina Council of Safety that the British fleet in Charleston harbored runaway slaves. Incensed slaveowners on the Council promptly warned all ship captains that supplies from town would be terminated if such outrageous and dangerous activity continued. Captain John Tollemache, commander of the HMS Scorpion, defiantly replied that the slaves on board his ship "came as freemen, and demanding protection; that he could have had near five hundred, who had offered."98 Laurens warned fellow planter Ralph Izard that "many of your negroes" with "vicious designs" continually deserted Izard's plantations and ran off to Charleston hoping to reach the British vessels. He urged Izard to hire someone who had more time than Laurens to hunt down and retrieve his runaway slaves.99 During the British invasion of 1779, one British commander reported that "the banditti of negroes who flocked to the conquerors" did more damage to Whig property "than the whole army put together."100 Captain Thomas Hall told Major Isaac Harleston in Charleston that "a one-eved taylor negro fellow of yours went off to the English with his wife, children, and

<sup>&</sup>quot;See Sylvia R. Frey, <u>Water From the Rock: Black Resistance In A Revolutionary</u> Age (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 45-80, Peter Kolchin, <u>American Slavery</u>, 1619-1827 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 70-76.

<sup>98</sup> Minutes of the South Carolina Council of Safety, December 8, December 10, 1775, Naval Documents of the American Revolution, 3:14-15, 41-43, 104-105, 133-136.

Henry Laurens to Ralph Izard, June 9, 1777, Papers of Henry Laurens, 11:350.
 Archibald Campbell to "Sir," January 9, 1779, Prioleau Autograph Collection.

South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

enticed five more." Birtish raiders took nine slaves from Thomas Pinckney's Ashepoo plantation in 1779. The remaining ones, Pinckney complained, "are now perfectly free and live upon the best provence of the plantation." His overseer hid in a nearby swamp and afterwards returned to the plantation but "the negroes pay no attention to his orders." White complaints about the British stealing slaves continued throughout the war and for years afterward. 103

Ironically, though white Charlestonians feared the loss of their authority over the city's slaves, some remained confident that slaves would fight for the Whig cause if properly armed, trained, and led by white officers. The notion of arming slaves did not appeal to most white Southemers, of course, and the issue proved to be divisive and emotional. [61] South Carolinians resisted using blacks to fill state quotas, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>166</sup>Captain Thomas Hall to Major Isaac Harleston, June 14, 1780, "Records of the Regiments of the South Carolina Line, Continental Establishment," <u>South Carolina</u> <u>Historical Magazzine</u> 6 (July 1905): 111.

 $<sup>^{102}</sup>$  Thomas Pinckney to Eliza Lucas Pinckney, May 17, 1779, Pinckney Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Frey, <u>Watter From the Rock</u>, 172-205. When the British evacuated Charleston in December 1782, Whigs compliande bitterly about the British earnying off slaves and reportedly found over 200 blacks "barreled up like beef or pork" aboard the British transport ships. See Edmund Pendicton to James Madison, December 2, 1782, in David John Mays, ed., <u>The Letters and Papers of Edmund Pendicton</u>, 1722-1803, 2 vols. (Charlettesville VA: University Fress of Virginia, 1967), 1-136. One reason for Charletton's bostile response to the Jay Treaty in 1795 was because it ignored the issue of British reparations for slaves taken from South Carolina during the war. See George Smith McCowen, "Chief Justice John Ruttedge and the Jay Treaty." <u>South Carolina Historical Misaciane</u> 60 (January 1961), 10-23.

<sup>104</sup>For the ways in which blacks served in the Revolutionary War, see Luther P. Jackson, "Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seamen in the American Revolution," <u>Journal of</u>

Congressman Edward Rutledge strongly contested the use of black soldiers in the Continental Army as well. 169 John Adams scoffed that South Carolinians "would run out of their wits at the least hint" of a "Nogro battalion." 168 Nevertheless, in early 1778 John Laurens proposed arming and leading a regiment of black troops in South Carolina, with the promise of freedom after the war. 169 His father, having undergone something of a transformation himself in regard to slavery, raised some challenging and thoughtful reservations. 168 If, as the younger Laurens insisted, he had no right to own slaves as property, "upon what ground of justice will you insist upon their enlisting for soldiers, as the condition of their enfranchisement? If they are free-tell them so-set them at full

Negor History 27 (July 1942); 247-287; Herbert Aptheker, "The Negor in the American Revolution," in Aptheker, Essaus in the History of the American Negor (New York: International Publishers, 1945); Benjamin Quarles, The Negro In the American Revolution (Publishers, 1945); Benjamin Quarles, The Negro In the American Revolution (Publishers, 1946); Wallace Brown, "Negroes and the American Revolution," History Today 1940); 556-567; Psouth Gacolina Historical Magazine 73 (Junary 1972); 1-17, Syvina F. Frey, "The Hirish and the Black: A New Perspective," The Historian 38 (Pebruary 1976): 225-238; Philip S. Forner, Blacks in the American Revolution (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1976); M. Foster Farley, "The South Carolina Negro in the American Revolution, 1775-1783," South Carolina Historical Magazine 73 (April 1987): 550 (April 1978): 550 (April 1978): 575

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup>Small numbers of free blacks served in the army in all states except South Carolina and Georgia. Kolehin, <u>American Slavery</u>, 71; Rutledge quoted in Richard Smith's Diary, September 26, 1775, <u>Letters of Delegates To Congress</u>, 1774-1789, 2:67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>166</sup>John Adams to Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant, August 17, 1776, <u>Papers of John Adams</u>, 4:469.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup>John Laurens to Henry Laurens, January 14, 1778, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u>, 12:305.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup>Henry Laurens's changing attitudes about slavery are discussed in chapter six. See Henry Laurens to John Laurens, August 14, 1776, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u>, 11:222-246.

ilberry—and then address them in the language of a recruiting officer to any other free men." Despite his reservations, Henry Laurens gave his assent to the plan, encouraging his son to proceed with caution against "the opinions of whole nations." When the British invaded Georgia in 1779, John Laurens brought his plan for arming slaves before the South Carolina General Assembly, where both the House and Senate rejected the scheme. <sup>110</sup> The cold reaction among Carolina slaveowners did not surprise Henry Laurens. He consoled his disappointed son but warned him that "rich men [do not] part willingly with the very source of their wealth." <sup>111</sup> The British conquest of Savannah in December 1778 convinced even the elder Laurens of the necessity and wisdom of arming always. He drafted a committee report in Congress urging Southern governors to arm "able bodied negrees," and he assured George Washington that with three thousand armed slaves the Americans could drive the British out of Georgia and conquer East Florida as well. <sup>112</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Henry Laurens to John Laurens, January 22, 1778, February 6, 1778, September 21, 1779, John Laurens Henry Laurens, February 17, 1779, March 10, 1779, 1780, \*South Carolina Historical Magazine 6 (April, Corber) 1969; 4748, 50-1, 1737-1780, \*South Laurens to Henry Laurens, January 14, 1778, February 2, 1778, Henry Laurens to John Laurens, January 28, 1778, Repent Gelfren Laurens, 1953, 567-359, 307-393, John Laurens, John Laurens, John Laurens, January 14, 1778, February 2, 1778, Henry Laurens, John Laurens, John

<sup>110</sup> Farley, "South Carolina Negro in the American Revolution," 81-82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup>Henry Laurens to John Laurens, September 21, 1779, "Correspondence Between Hon. Henry Laurens and His Son, John, 1777-1780," 149-150.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup>John Houston to Henry Laurens, January 2, 1779, Henry Laurens Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston; Henry Laurens' Draft Committee Report, March 1779, Laurens to George Washington, March 16, 1779, <u>Letters of Delegates to Congress</u>.

Even the chaos of war and occupation, however, could not force the majority of white Charlestonians to adopt so disagreeable a measure. John Laurens raised the scheme again in 1780 when the British invaded South Carolina, and finally in 1782, never with success. General Nathanael Greene pleaded with Governor John Rutledge to reconsider the policy of utilizing "this great resource that you neglected to avail yourselves of, which if you had adopted before the reduction of Charlestown might have secured your country against all it has undergone." Greene's formidable presence before the legislature made no difference. On February 4, 1782, John Laurens brought the issue to the floor of the South Carolina General Assembly for the last time, but received the support of only thirteen members. "I was out-voted," Laurens complained bitterly to his friend Alexander Hamilton, "having only reason on my side, and being opposed by a triple-headed monster of avarice, prejudice, and pusillanimity in our assemblies." "He wither expediency nor pagamatism could persuade Carolina slaveowners of the efficacy of such a radical notion. Having seen so much of their once stable world transformed by 1782, it is not surreising

<sup>12:246-248, 200.</sup> For Washington's reply, which was not favorable, see Washington to Henry Laurens, March 20, 1779, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington From the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, 39 vols. (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 14:267.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup>Nathanael Greene to Governor Rutledge, January 21, 1782, Nathanael Greene Papers, Library of Congress, microfilm, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>&</sup>quot;John Laurens to Alexander Hamilton, July 1782, Harold C. Syrett, ed., The peres of Alexander Hamilton, 26 vols, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1979), 3120-121; Farley, "South Carolina Negro in the American Revolution," 81,82; Aclausa Burk to Arthur Middleton, January 25, 1782, in Joseph W. Barmwell, ed., "Correspondence of Hon. Arthur Middleton," South Carolina Historical Magazine 26 (October 1925): 194.

that they would overwhelmingly reject a measure which could only have weakened further their already diminished powers.

The chaos engendered by political division, the economy, and slave unrest intensified after the British invasion of 1779<sup>115</sup> and the conquest and occupation of Charleston in 1780. The British shifted military operations to the Southern theater in 1778, and the occupation of Savannah provided the necessary base of operations for a successful assault on the Carolina capital in late 1779. Throughout the winter of 1780

<sup>&</sup>quot;For accounts of the unsuccessful 1779 British assault on Charleston, see South Carolina and American General Gazette. May 29, 1779. George Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, March 31, 1779, Clinton to Germain. April 4, 1779, Bocuments of the American Recyclution, 178-890, 06-697. James Haw. "A Broken Compact: Insecurity, Union, and the Proposed Surrender of Charleston, 1779. "South Carolina Historical Magazine 26 (January 1995): 30-51; Vipperman, Bige of Rawlina Lowedes, 223-224-John Carroll Cavanagh, "The Military Career of Major General Benjamin Lincoln in the War of the American Revolution, 1775-1781, "Ph. D. dissertation, Duke University, 1969, 153-154; C.F.W. Coker, ed., "Journal of John Graham, South Carolina Militia, 1779," Military Collector & Historican 19 (Summer 1967); 35-47.

<sup>116</sup>The primary and secondary literature on the siege and conquest of Charleston in 1780 is vast. For the evolution of British strategy, see James Simpson to Sir Henry Clinton, August 20, 1779, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Series I, South Carolina Historical Society; Sir Henry Clinton to George Germain, August 21, 1779. Germain to Clinton, September 27, 1779, Governor James Wright to Clinton, February 3, 1780, Documents of the American Revolution, 17:189-191, 223-225, 18:45-48. For the siege and capture of Charleston, see the following. British manuscripts: Clinton to Germain, May 13, 1780, James Simpson to Clinton, May 15, 1780, Simpson to Germain. June 9, 1780, Documents of the American Revolution, 18:86-89, 94-95, 104-105; Marjot Arbuthnot to "Sirs." May 14, 1780, ADM 1/486:355, 366-367, Admirals' Dispatches, Admiralty and Secretariat Papers, Public Record Office, London, microfilm, Manuscripts, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia: John Laurens to Henry Laurens, May 25, 1780, William Gillmore Simms Collection of Henry Laurens Papers, Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts, microfilm, South Caroliniana Library; John Peebles Notebook. Charleston Library Society, Charleston: John Rutledge to the Delegates of South Carolina in Congress, May 24, 1780, John Rutledge Letters; John Mathews to Thomas Bee, June 9, 1780, Thomas Bee Correspondence; Charleston Siege Journal. South Carolina Historical Society.

whites fled plantations in panic, abandoning the lowcountry to the invading British and

the thousand of slaves who easerly capitalized on the opportunity to secure their

Charleston: John Rutledge to Col, Benjamin Garden, March 2, 1780, Pringle Family Papers; Mary Cochran to her son, 1780, Cochran Family Letters in Bacot-Huger Papers; Gabriel Manigault Diary; Dr. Uzal Johnson Journal, original in Princeton University Library. Printed sources, both primary and secondary: William Moultrie, Memoirs of the American Revolution, 2 vols, (New York: David Longworth, 1802: reprint ed. in one volume. New York: Arno Press, 1968), 2:44-212; Henry Lee, Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Bradford & Inskeen, 1812), 1:113-150; Bernhard A. Uhlendorf, trans. and ed., The Siege of Charleston With an Account of the Province of South Carolina; Diaries and Letters of Hessian Officers From the von Jungkenn Papers in the William L. Clements Library (Ann Arbor MI: University Of Michigan Press, 1938; reprint ed., New York: Amo Press, 1968); Benjamin F. Stevens, ed., The Campaign in Virginia, 1781; An Exact Reprint of Six Rare Pamphlets on the Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy, 2 vols. (London: For the author, 1882); Captain Johann Ewald, Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal, trans. & ed., by Joseph P. Tustin (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 196-243: William B. Willcox, ed., The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782 (New Haven CT; Yale University Press, 1954), 157-172; Charles Ross, ed., Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1859), 1:43-79; William T. Bulger, "Sir Henry Clinton's 'Journal of the Siege of Charleston, 1780," South Carolina Historical Magazine 66 (July 1965): 147-174: Alan S. Brown, ed., "James Simpson's Reports on the Carolina Loyalists, 1779-1780," Journal of Southern History 21 (November 1955); 513-519; Joseph Ioor Waring, "Lieutenant John Wilson's 'Journal of the Siege of Charleston," South Carolina Historical Magazine 66 (July 1965): 175-182; Richard K. Murdoch, trans., "A French Account of the Siege of Charleston, 1780," South Carolina Historical Magazine 67 (July 1966); 138-154; George Fenwick Jones, ed., "The 1780 Siege of Charleston as Experienced by a Hessian Officer." South Carolina Historical Magazine 88 (January and April 1987); 23-33, 63-73; Ramsay, History of South Carolina 1670-1808, 1:320-321; "The Siege of Charleston: Journal of Captain Peter Russell. December 25, 1779, to May 2, 1780," American Historical Review 4 (April 1899): 478-501; Pancake, This Destructive War, 56-67; Russell F. Weigley, The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 4-9; McCrady, South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780, 445-506; Bulger, "British Expedition to Charleston," 112-177; Wilmot G. DeSaussure, "The Siege of Charleston, 1780," Yearbook, City of Charleston, 1884 (Charleston SC: Walker, Evans, & Cogsdell, 1885), 282-308; Cavanagh, "Military Career of Benjamin Lincoln," 187-202; George W. Kyte, "British Invasion of South Carolina in 1780," The Historian 14 (Spring 1952): 149-172.

freedom. 117 After an extended siege of Charleston, the British finally conquered and occupied the Southern metropolis on May 12, 1780.118 The fall of Charleston proved to be the single greatest military loss for the Americans during the war. The ravages of the preceding four years had transformed Charleston, and the destruction in the once prosperous capital shocked returning royal officials, "Nothing but the evidence of my senses," former attorney general James Simpson marveled, "would have convinced me that one half of the distress I am witness to could have been produced in so short a time in so rich a country. Numbers of families, who four years ago abounded in every convenience and luxury of life, are without food to live on, clothes to cover them, or the means to purchase either."119 Former Lieutenant Governor William Bull described a "melancholy scene which could not but affect me greatly." At every turn Bull witnessed the material and human consequences of the devastation of war. Perhaps most alarming. the city's slaves had "become ungovernable, absenting themselves often from the service of their masters. The code of laws calculated for the government of that class of people

<sup>117</sup>See Frey, Water From the Rock, 108-142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>For the occupation of Charleston, see George Smith McCowen Ir., The British Occupation of Charleston, 1780-1782 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1972); Walsh, Charleston Sons of Liberry, 89-98; Alexander R. Stoesen, "The British Occupation of Charleston, 1780-1782." South Carolina Historical Magazine 63 (1962); "1-42; Frederick Bermays Wiener, Cystilians Under Milling Pustice: The British Practice Since 1689 Especially in North America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 152-159.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>James Simpson to General Henry Clinton, July 1, 1780, quoted in Vipperman, Biss of Rawlins Loundes. 226. See also John Peebles Diary, May 25, 1780, 2016. Caroliniana Library, and Eliza Lucas Pinckney to Alexander Garden, May 14, 1782, in Elise Pinckney, ed., "Letters of Eliza Lucas Pinckney, 1768-1782," South Carolina Historicai Magazine 76 (July 1975): 168-169.

[can] not be carried into execution. \*130 During the occupation the British forced most of the city's governing elite into exile or imprisonment. \*11 Charleston loyalists never inspired a sufficient level of confidence to convince their conquerors to restore civil government in the city, and the British fared no better at maintaining economic and political stability than had their Whig counterparts. \*132 A Board of Police, primarily former Crown officials, governed the city for the two and a half years of British occupation. \*133 After the Board reopened the port to British commerce, Scottish merchants flooded the market with more goods, one local reported, than \*three such crops as the present would

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup>William Bull to George Germain, February 14, March 22, 1781, C.O. 5/176, Colonial Office Papers, Class 5, America and the West Indies, General Correspondence of the Secretary of State with Civil Officers of the Revolting Colonies, Public Record Office, London, microfilm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>For a list of Charlestonians banished, imprisoned, or sent to St. Augustine, see Accovent, The British Occupation of Charleston, 151-152, Made I. L. Webber, ed. <sup>12</sup>Iosish Smith's Diary, 1780-1781," South Carolina Historical Magazine 33 (1932): 3-4, 6, 100, 34 (1933): 78-83; McCrady, South Garolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780, 716-717; Joseph W. Barnwell, ed., \*Letters To General Greene and Others, \*South Carolina Historical Magazine 17 (1916): 3-13, 35-57; "The Old Postoffice," Yearbook, City of Charleston, 1389 (Charleston SC: Luesa & Richardson, 1898), 358-359, See also Contwallis to Germain, September 19, 1780, Documents of the American Revolution, 18169-171.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup>See the petition of South Carolina Merchants to Germain, October 25, 1781, <u>Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 20:250-252, and Germain to Buil, September 1, 1781, C.O. 5/176, Colonial Office Papers, microfilm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>McGowen, The British Occupation of Charleston. 13-42. For the proceedings of the Board of Police, see C. O. 5/513-535, Colonial Office Papers, Class 5, America and the West Indies, Entry Book and Journal of the Proceedings of the Board of Police, Public Record Office, London, microfilm, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.

pay for." Inflation remained rampant, prices high, money scarce, and the British turned to economic coercion to enforce political loyalty. <sup>123</sup> The British forced all remaining arrisans to pledge allegiance to the crown in order to practice their trade. <sup>126</sup> Such policies only served to strengthen the Whig cause, and many clitzens fled to the relative safety of the countryside. Many would have undoubtedly remained in town had the British allowed them to remain neutral. The city thus became an island of loyalism, and the capture of the Southern metropolis did not have the effect that the British desired. It certainly did not quash the rebellion in the South, as the Southern governors had promised it would in 1775. Indeed, by late 1781 the American army under the command of General Nathanael Greene had recaptured almost all of South Carolina except Charleston. <sup>127</sup>

The South Carolina legislature met for the first time in two years in January 1782 in Jacksonborough, just thirty miles from Charleston. The assembly felt confident enough about their ultimate victory to pass a series of amercement and confiscation acts

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Samuel Carne to Christopher Rolleston, October 12, 1780, Samuel Carne Papers, South Caroliniana Library. See also James Simpson to William Knox, October 31, 1780, C.O. 5/178: 167-178, Colonial Office Papers, Class 5, America and the West Indies, First Peace Commission, Public Record Office, London, microfilm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup>See Bull to Germain, June 28, November 11, 1781, C.O. 5/176, Colonial Office Papers, microfilm; Simpson to Germain, September 25, 1780, <u>Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 18:177-178.

<sup>126</sup> Walsh, Charleston's Sons of Liberty, 97-98.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup>See Clinton to Germain, December 3, 1781, <u>Documents of the American Revolution</u>, 20:270-271; George W. Kyte, "General Greene's Plans for the Capture of Charleston, 1781-1782," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 62 (1961): 96-106.

against the states's leading Loyalists, many from Charleston.<sup>23</sup> Disappointed and bitter royal officials in Charleston could only complain that "it is a most unpleasant situation." After Comwallis's defeat at Yorktown, Virginia, in October 1781, royal civil and military officials realized that the British could not remain bottled up in the South Carolina capital indefinitely. Throughout the fall of 1782 the harbor filled with transports, and after months of delay, the British evacuated Charleston on December 14, 1782, carrying thousands of black and white refugees with them. Royal government had ended forever in South Carolina. "I cannot forget that happy day when we marched into Charlestown with the American troops," William Moultrie remembered years later, "both citizens and soldiers shed mutual tears of joy." "Oh, it was a day of jubilee indeed," another Carolinian recalled, "a day of rejoicing never to be forgotten."

The war transformed Charleston in ways that would have seemed unimaginable ten years earlier. Certainly much of the physical structure of the city lay in ruins, but that

<sup>11</sup> Weir, Colonial South Carolina, 336: Salley, Journal of the House of Representatives of South Carolina, January 8, 1782-February 26, 1782; Levett, "Loyalism in Charleston, 1761-1784", 12-16; Robert W. Barnwell Jr., "The Migration of Loyalists From South Carolina," <u>Proceedings of the South Carolina, Historical Association</u>, 1937, 44-2, Barnwell, Loyalists in South Carolina, Tebras Siry, "Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1941; Kathy Roc Coker, "The Punishment of Revolutionary War Loyalists in South Carolina," <u>Ph.D. dissertation</u>, University of South Carolina, 1957.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup>Charleston, 1670-1883, "Yearbook. City of Charleston, 1883 (Charleston SC: News & Courier Book Presses, 1883), 417-418; Joseph W. Barnwell, The Evacuation of Charleston By the British in 1782," South Carolina Historical Magazine 11 (January 1910): 7-9; Bull to Thomas Townshend, January 19, 1783, Documenta 11 (January 1910): 7-9; Bull to Thomas Townshend, January 19, 1783, Documenta of the American Revolution, 21:148-149; Cabriel Manigault Diary, December 14, 1782, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, George W. Kyte, "Thaddeste Societized Act The Liberation of Charleston, 1782," South Carolina Historical Society Act The

in time would be rebuilt. The conflicts over non-importation, constitutional revision, representation, the established church, loyalty oaths, scarcity, inflation, and slave unrest had torn asunder the political, social, and economic ties that gave stability and structure to Charleston society. Lowcountry aristocrats would find in the postwar years that the war had stripped them of much of their unchallenged hegemony, particularly among urban artisans and backcountry farmers. Between 1776 and 1782 Charleston's elite faced military invasion, unprecedented political challenges to their authority, economic and social upheaval, and finally occupation, exile, and imprisonment. These crises accelerated the shift toward contentious, self-interested democratic politics and economic liberalism, and intensified the conflict over the time-honored institution of slavery. In the immediate postwar years, urban artisans subjected traditional leaders to a harsh democratic rhetoric, while backcountry farmers demanded both the removal of the capital and extensive constitutional revision. Revolutionary ideology and events outside Charleston in the 1790s would combine to subject the institution of slavery to unprecedented attacks that would forever alter the intellectual climate of the city. The war had ended, but the Southern metropolis would never be the same. "I am now by the will of God brought into a new world," Henry Laurens proclaimed after hearing the Declaration of Independence, "and God only knows what sort of world it will be." 130

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup>Henry Laurens to John Laurens, August 14, 1776, <u>Papers of Henry Laurens</u>, 11:234.

## CHAPTER FOUR DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL TWILIGHT, 1783-1790

"This revolution has introduced so much anarchy that it will take half a century to eradicate the licentiousness of the people."

David Ramsay, 1783

"In these days we are equal citizens of a DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, in which featously and opposition must naturally exist."

William Hornby, 1784

"Our governments tend too much to democracy." Ralph Izard, 1785

In the aftermath of the British occupation of Charleston, the city's elite struggled to contain the political radicalism unleashed by American Revolution. During the 1780s, city leaders would face a dual challenge to their authority and political dominance from both within the city and from the backcountry. Lowcountry aristocrats increasingly found themselves on the defensive; their unquestioned right to rule by virtue of wealth, lineage, and talents came under attack from all quarters. Dissidents within the city and throughout the backcountry challenged clite dominance and made repeated demands for a more agaliarian government. To many of the clite, the American Revolution seemed to be a mixed blessing. To be sure, it brought political independence from Great British and a potentially bright conomic future, but it also left aristocratic rule and Charlesson's hegemony vulnerable. The clite responded in a variety of ways. They sought both to

contain the political radicalism of the American Revolution—the democratic equalitarianism that threatened their authority—while encouraging the rising spirit of economic liberalism that might ultimately ensure their city's continued survival and economic supremacy in the region. ¹ Lowcountry leaders succeeded temporarily in both endeavors. They contained the radicalism within the city through incorporation, by the passage of debor laws and paper money, and by supporting a stronger federal government that could regulate commerce and trade. By 1790, however, external pressure from the backcountry forced lowcountry leaders into political compromise, and ultimately they failed to sustain the economic vision that might have staved off Charleston's eventual decline.

The American Revolution thus brought both political and economic radicalism to Charleston and South Carolina. The Revolution also irrevocably altered Charleston's position in both the state and region. By 1790, Charleston was no longer South Carolina's capital, and by 1800 Baltimore had surpassed Charleston as the largest southern city.<sup>2</sup> New Orleans would outpace the city by 1810. Nevertheless, the rise of cotton ensured that Charleston would remain an economic force in the Lower South.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Economic liberalism" is defined as an economic system stressing aggressive, acquisitive economic behavior, individualism, competition, and voluntary participation in markets for economic advancement and an improved standard of living.

For the growth of Baltimore from the colonial period through the Revolution and beyond, see Lawrence H. Larsen, Ele-Uhma South. A History (Lewingto NY. University) Press of Kentucky, 1990), 10-12; Gary Larson Browne, <u>Baltimore in the Nation, 1789</u>. 1861 (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), William Bruce Wheeler, "Urban Politics in Nature's Expublic: The Development of Political Parties in the Seaport Cities in the Federalist Era," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1967, 144-210.

Local leaders worked hard to maintain the city's dominance in the region. This chapter examines the political controversies of the post-war years, while the next chapter treats economic chances.

The war and the British occupation of Charleston exacted an enormous human and physical toll on the city. In the aftermath of the war, Charlestonians concentrated first on rebuilding their city and their lives. This meant replenishing Charleston with goods, supplies, and, most important, slaves. British merchants had flocked to Charleston during the occupation; state leaders simply allowed many of them to remain behind the departing British army to dispose of surplus goods and collect debts. Consequently, native merchants found themselves squeezed out of what was by all accounts a booming business. British merchants had access to easy credit in London, and Charleston planters were all too eager to go into debt to restock their plantations. The lenient policy toward British merchants led to growing anti-Tory and anti-British resentment among native merchants and artisans that manifested itself in different ways. As will be shown in chanter five, native merchants revived the dormant Charleston Chamber of Commerce to promote trade and commerce and actively sought new trade routes and connections to lessen their dependence on Britain.3 Native artisans, however, took their protests to the streets under the leadership of Alexander Gillon, who formed the Marine Anti-Britannic Society to oppose British merchants and lenient policies toward former enemies. Gillon,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>The Chamber of Commerce had first been established by conservative merchants during the tea crisis of 1773.

a native merchant, had an anti-aristocratic strain as well.<sup>4</sup> He promoted ties with the backcountry, openly supporting both moving the capital inland and the emission of paper money. These measures, of course, alarmed Charleston's traditional leaders.

The clite reacted to the growing animosity among artisans and native merchants in part by incorporating Charles Town (now renamed Charleston) in order to give city leaders more direct authority to deal with anti-Tory demonstrations. They fretted that street demonstrations threatened the city's security and, more important, its reputation in the international trading community at just the moment when the city was trying desperately to revive its economic and commercial life. Anti-Tory sentiment soon evolved into a full-blown anti-aristocratic movement. In the fall of 1784 Gillon challenged Richard Hutson for his seat as Charleston intendant (or mayor). Though Gillon lost the election, the elite did not remain completely unresponsive to the demands of the lower sort in regards to British merchants. By 1785 many planters had gone deeply in debt to the British merchants they had so eagerly welcomed in 1783, and the lack of specie made it difficult for them to meet their financial obligations. Subsequently, they passed a series of debtor relief laws and issued paper money to stave off their creditors. Because these measures particularly benefitted planters and backcountry farmers, South Carolina avoided an agrarian uprising analogous to Shavs Rebellion, though some farmers did disrupt court proceedings in the backcountry before the laws had been passed.

Gillon was of course born in Holland. By "native," I mean that he was in Charleston before the war and was not British.

Lowcountry planters overwhelmingly favored passage of the United States Constitution in 1787 in part because of their enormous debt.

Simultaneously, the backcountry challenged Charleston's leaders and demanded a

more egalitarian state government. Backcountry Whigs fought a vicious civil war during the Revolution, and by the mid-1780s their political demands could no longer be ignored. Most prominently, they called for the capital to be relocated to a more central inland location and for constitutional revision to give the upcountry a more balanced representation in the state legislature. The pressure to relocate the capital and revise the state constitution became relentless, and in 1786 the legislature nominally moved the capital upcountry to Columbia. The move did not become a reality, however, until 1790, By that time, of course, Charleston's leaders had begun to face reality. They knew they could no longer brush backcountry demands aside; the majority of the population had been located in the backcountry for over twenty years, and 80 percent of the white population lived in the backcountry by 1790.5 The sacrifices and trauma of the war years politicized backcountry leaders, making them more assertive and defiant toward lowcountry aristocrats. Charleston's leaders recognized the need to strengthen their ties to the upcountry, and over the next twenty years they put enormous amounts of energy into the effort. They responded favorably to the innumerable calls for such internal

United States Bureau of the Census, Heads of Families At the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790, South Carolina (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1908), 9; Marvin R. Zahniser, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 106.

improvements as roads, bridges, and ferries, and aggressively cleared rivers and invested in canals to link the uplands with the Charleston market.

Cotton, however, breathed new life into the city, and ultimately exemented the political and economic ties between the two sections. With the loss of the British bounty on indigo, planters began looking for viable alternatives to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by independence. They found it in cotton, especially after improved ginning methods made short-staple cotton production more profitable after 1793. If Charleston no longer dominated the state politically, it would continue to be the port through which the great staple crops of Carolina flowed. Lowcountry leaders thus began to ally themselves with aggressive upcountry leaders to ensure Charleston's continued dominance.

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After the British evacuated Charleston on December 14, 1782, Carolinians immediately began rebuilding their war-ravaged city. The war and occupation left almost no one untouched. The euphoria of the first few days of liberation soon gave way to a sense of melancholy and loss as returning refugees confronted enormous property damage and the disruptions to familiar patterns of trade, commerce, and agriculture. Charleston in early 1783 differed enormously from the pre-war metropolis, and in many ways the capital never recovered its former glory. "This country is left destitute," David Ramsay told his friend Benjamin Rush, "and will not be like the former Carolina for years to come."

Indeed, over a decade later one Frenchman noted Charlestonians "feel yet the consequences of the war; most of them are still involved in debt."

Unlike Newport, Rhode Island, however, British occupation of Charleston did not bring immediate post-war decline.

\*\*Charleston had never competed directly with another colonial Southern port that could capitalize on the city's occupation, as Newport had competed with Providence. And, unlike Newport, most of the city's pre-war elite returned and labored to restore Charleston to its former position of prominence.

The British left behind more than destroyed buildings, however. The atrocities carried out by both Whig and Tory throughout the state, especially in the backcountry, made it difficult, if not impossible, for many Carolinians to forgive and forget the bitter divisions of the war years. The fierce partisan struggle of 1780-1782 left behind deep wounds and years passed before South Carolina was again at peace with itself.\* Some

David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, June 8, 1783, in Robert L. Brunhouse, ed., "David Ramsay, 1749-1815; Selections From His Writings," <u>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 55</u>, Part 4 (1965); 74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Francois Alexandre Frédéric, duc de La Rochefoucault-Liancourt, <u>Travels</u> <u>Through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper</u> <u>Canada, In the Years 1795, 1796, 1797, 2 vols.</u> (London: R. Phillips, 1799), 1:574.

<sup>&</sup>quot;For a compelling interpretation of Providence's rise and Newport's decline due to British occupation, see Lynne Withey, Urban Growth in Colonial Rhoed Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 1-7, 77-78, 97-102. Withey effectively demonstrates how demography, geography, and strong, financially secure elite made the difference in Providence's reader the war. See also Eilanie Forman Crane, A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985).

Yor the civil war in South Carolina, see Russell F. Weigley, The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1970); John S. Pancake, This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the

Charleston Whigs considered this legacy worse than all the stolen and missing slaves, smoking ruins and damaged property combined. Houses could be rebuilt, Goose Creek planter and legislator Ralph Izard noted, but "the hatred planted in the breasts of our Citizens against each other is the most serious injury they have done us." It is that it will take half a century to eradicate the licentiousness of the people. It In 1789, as the French began their own revolution, South Carolina Senator Pierce Butler cautioned them to remember the lessons of the bitter struggle in South Carolina. If the French "felt as much of the miscries of Civil War" as the Carolinians, "they would enter on the business with caution. When once the dogs of civil war are let loose it is no easy matter to call them back."

Much of this spirit of revenge manifested itself in the controversy over confiscation and amercement of Loyalist property. The South Carolina legislature met in Jacksonborough (thirty miles east of occupied Charleston) in January 1782 and passed a

Carolinas, 1786-1782 (University AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985), Alice N. Waring. The Fighting Elder. Andrew Pickens, 1739-1817 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1962); Anne King Gregorie, Thomas Sumter (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1931); Hugh F. Rankin, Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox (New York, 1973).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Ralph Izard to Thomas Jefferson, April 27, 1784, in Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 26 vols.to date (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 7:130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, July 11, 1783, "Ramsay Writings," 75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Pierce Butler to Rev. Weeden Butler, March 15, 1789, quoted in Jerome J. Nadelhaft, "The 'Havoc of War' and its Aftermath in Revolutionary South Carolina," Histoire Sociale 12 (May 1979): 117-118.

series of laws punishing Carolina Tories. Amid a flurry of petitions asking for forgiveness and explaining extenuating circumstances, legislators spent the better part of the next three years easing punishments or removing transgressors entirely from the list. Such leniency infuriated many Charleston merchants and artisans who had been prevented by the British from earning a living during the occupation because of their staunch and unwavering patriotism. Many of Charleston's leaders, they argued, too eagerly welcomed former enemies back into the community. The debate over this policy of forgiveness raised tempers to a fever pitch on both sides. Many post-war leaders, primarily planters and other non-merchant professionals, pleaded for a "spirit of moderation." Physician David Ramssy feared "the madness and unforgiving temper of some Whigs." The war had ended, and it was time to move on, to "amalgamate the

<sup>13</sup> For the Jacksonborough legislature, see A.S. Salley Jr., ed., Journal of the House of Representatives of South Carolina, January 8, 1782 - February 26, 1782 (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1916); Salley, ed., Journal of the Senate of South Carolina. January 8, 1782 - February 26, 1782 (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1941). For loyalists in South Carolina, see Robert W. Barnwell, "Loyalists in South Carolina, 1765-1785," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1941; Kathy Roe Coker, "The Punishment of Revolutionary War Loyalists in South Carolina," Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1987; Robert M. Weir, "The Violent Spirit,' the Reestablishment of Order, and the Continuity of Leadership in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina," in Ronald Hoffman et al., eds., An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution (Charlottesville VA: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 70-98; Ella Pettit Levett. "Loyalism in Charleston, 1761-1784," Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 1936, 3-17; Ralph L. Andreano and Herbert O. Werner, "Charleston Loyalists: A Statistical Note," South Carolina Historical Magazine 60 (July 1959): 164-168: Robert S. Lambert, South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987); Robert M. Calhoon, The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781 (New York, 1973); Wallace Brown, The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965).

people into one homogeneous body." Attorney Francis Kinloch, himself of suspect loyalties through much of the war, compared the "torrents of filliberal party rage" to the "passion which animates a child to torment some helpless insect that falls within its reach."

British merchants felt the brunt of Whig animosity in Charleston. After the British captured Charleston in May 1780, scores of British merchants flocked to the occupied city to capitalize on the renewed trade. In late 1782, as the British prepared to evacuate the city, many of these same merchants petitioned Whig Governor John Mathews to remain in Charleston long enough to sell their surplus goods and collect the debts owed them. To the astonishment of most native artisans and merchants (and not a few planters, who would become their best customers), Mathews agreed. Native merchants who had refused British protection during the occupation and had been exiled now had a difficult time reestablishing their business affairs in the face of stiff British competition.<sup>36</sup> Shock turned to fury when the planter-dominated legislature extended the

<sup>\*</sup>iDavid Ramsay to "Dear Sir," September 10, 1782, David Ramsay Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. For similar sentiments, see Ralph izard to Thomas Jefferson, April 27, 1784, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 7:130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Francis Kinloch to Thomas Boone, September 1, 1783, in Felix Gilbert, ed., "Letters of Francis Kinloch to Thomas Boone," <u>Journal of Southern History</u> 8 (February 1942): 97.

Pretition of William Logan and others concerning the business practices of certain British Merchanis in Charleston, January 30, 1783, Petitions, 1782-1838, Records of the General Assembly, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia Cheracther cited as SCDAH). For Mathew's agreement with the British merchants; see Paul A. Horne, "The Governorship of John Mathews, 1782-1783," M.A. chesis, University of South Carolina, 1982, Edward Rutledge to Arthur Middleton, August 1782, and Joseph W. Barrewill, ed., "Correspondence of Hon. Arthur Middleton, Spoth Carolina (Spoth Carolina Cheracther).

merchants' stay an additional twelve months, until March 1, 1784.<sup>17</sup> This arrangement, of course, enormously benefitted the planten. Well-connected British merchants had access to merchandsies, slaves, and especially credit, that native merchants lacked. Planters in the aftermath of war eagerly sought to purchase manufactured goods and to replenish their plantations with slaves, and they quickly and rather carelessly went into debt with their former enemies. The British benefitted so greatly during the period 1783-1785 that one critic called these years "the sunshine harvest of British commerce, policy, and influence." Aedanus Burke, though not a merchant himself, gave voice to the frustration of that group when he complained that the British 'plant here a standing army of merchants, factors, clerks, agents, and emissaries who out maneuvre, undersell, and

Historical Magazine 27 (January 1926): 21-22; James Madison to Edmund Randolph; September 10, 182a; Piaul H. Smit, ed., Letters of Delegates to Congress, 174-1789. 23 vols. to date (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1976-), 1914-0142. For a discussion of the British merchants, see John C. Meleny, The Public Life of Aedmuns Burker. Revolutionary Republician in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina (South Carolina Columbia SC: University of South Carolina (South Carolina Columbia SC: University of South Carolina (South Carolina Columbia SC: University of South Carolina (South Carolina (Grono MF: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1918), 19-48. Richard Bernt Clow. "Edward Rutledge of South Carolina, 1796-1800: Uproclaimed Stutesman." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1976, 186-187, George C. Rogens 7:, "Aedman Burke, Nuthamael Greene, Anthony Wayne, and the British Merchans of Charleston." South Carolina Historical Magazine 67 (April 1966):

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Petition of British Merchants in Charlestown Concerning their Agreement with Covernor Mathews, February 17, 178, Petitions, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH. Some of the leading British merchants who petitioned for this extension included partners Henry Shoolberd and Benjamin Moodle, who served as British consulin Charleston in Levi 1796, William Tumon (from an influential merchant family with the in London and Charleston,) Jonathan and William Simpson, Thomas Stewart, James Miller and David Orlans. See George C. Rogers 17, Evolution of A. Federlistis: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758–1812) (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1962), 100

frighten away" other merchants. <sup>18</sup> Charleston split into pro- and anti-British merchant factions, and during the hot summer months of 1783 and 1784 the political and economic controversy spilled out into the streets.

During July 1783 "a considerable number" of Charleston's artisans, mechanics, and small merchants took to the streets to protest the policy toward British merchants. By all accounts they dragged at least four or five persons "obnoxious to the state" to the water pumps for a public dousing." The exact number of protesters, of course, is unknown. Frightened officials such as Governor Benjamin Guerard tended to overestimate the number and intent of the dissidents. The Charleston elite, as always, saw only evil purposes behind such activity and viewed protests from below as unlawful challenges to its authority. Guerard described these protests and similar ones that broke out the following summer as "great riofd) and disturbances, of a most dansecrous

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ac-damus Burke, A. Few Salutary-Hints, Pointing Out the Policy and Consequences of Admitting British Subjects to Engross Our Trade and Become Our Citizens, Addressed to Those Who Either Risqued or Lost Their All in Britishing About the Revolution (Charleston, 1786), 4. See also Jerome J. Nadelhari, "Ending South Carolina's War. Two 1782 Agreement Favoring the Planters," South Carolina Historical Magazing 80 (January 1979): 50-64, Joseph W. Bartwell, ed., "Diary of Timothy Ford," South Carolina Historical Magazing 3 (Jocober 1912): 194-195.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>South Carolina Gasette and General Advertiser, July 12, 1783; David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, July 11, 1783; "Ramsay Writings." 75; Meleney, Acadama Burke, 104–113; Googe C. Rogers Jr., Charleston in the Auge Ofthe Pinckness (1969; reprint, Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 56-51; Richard Walsh, Charleston's Sons of Liberts. A Study of the Artisans, 1769-1789 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 59-51; Richard Walsh, Charleston's Sons of Liberts. A Study of the Artisans, 1769-1789 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 113–121; Daniel Joseph McDononghi, "Christopher Gadsden and Henry Laurens: The Parallel Lives of Two American Patriots," Ph.D. dissertation, Juliversity of Hillonis, 1990, 4524–49.

nature." Most planters, of course, had a great deal to gain by the continued presence of the British merchants. They publicly condemned "mobs and riots" as unlawful and destructive of the public welfare. Many feared that these events would damage Charleston's international reputation at just the moment when it was trying desperately to reestablish commercial connections with the world. Congressman Jacob Read fretted that "these occurrences will be used to our great disadvantage on the other side of the Atlantic." De local newspaper denounced the tumults as "the last resource of a desponding people under a subverted government." There is no evidence that the protests of 1783-1784 were in fact any more radical than the Stamp Act demonstrations of 1765 or the protests over the importation of tea in 1773, actions which Charleston's elite supported. In fact, they closely resemble the protests over the lax enforcement of loyalty oaths in 1778. The difference in 1783-1784—and thus the real threat to established authority—by in the none too studte anti-aristocratic language that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Adele Stanton Edwards, ed., <u>Journals of the Privy Council</u>, <u>1783-1789</u>. The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 116.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>See the comments of "A Patriot," probably Christopher Gadsden, in South Carolina Gazette and General Advertises, July 15, 1783. See also Gadsden's essays opposing riots, mobs, and secret societies in Gazette of the State of South Carolina, May 6, July 17, and August 5, 1784. See also Gadsden to Samuel Adams, August 18, 1784, of Lord Walshed, "De Writings of Christopher Gadsden 1746-1805 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 239-240.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Jacob Read to Benjamin Guerard, September 4, 1784, <u>Letters of Delegates to Congress</u>, 21:786-788.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, July 12, 1783.

protesters adopted. Beginning in the summer of 1783 and continuing throughout the decade, even after the controversy surrounding Tories and British merchants passed, artisans, mechanics, and small merchants adopted anti-aristocratic rhetoric and increasingly questioned established authority. The Revolution radicalized these groups and brought them into the political mainstream, and they refused tenaciously to fall back into the ranks. They had participated in legal and extra-legal bodies since the nonimportation movement of 1768, and many no longer believed the myth that aristocratic rulers governed "disinterestedly," with only the public's best interest in mind. Artisans and mechanics now argued that greedy planters and especially lawyers (many of whom had been educated abroad, they pointed out) allowed self-interest to trample over republicanism in the controversy over British merchants.24 Prominent Charleston lawyers included John Rutledge and his brother Edward, William Drayton, Thomas Bee, John Mathews, John Faucheraud Grimké, Benjamin Guerard, Edward Rutledge, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and his brother Thomas, John Julius Pringle, Jacob Read, and Charles Pinckney. One critic denounced the "mal-administration of men in power or public trust,"25 A Whig styling himself "Democratic Gentle-Touch" criticized the "Nabob Phalanx in the legislature," and their "settled plan of ruling by a few, with a rod of iron."26 "Amicus" warned against "aristocratic influence (both IN and OUT of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>For the connections between Charleston lawyers and British merchants, see Rogers, <u>Evolution of a Federalist</u>, 112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Gazette of the State of South Carolina, August 6, 1783.

<sup>26</sup>Thid., August 19, 1784.

legislaturey" and cautioned his fellow citizens to "shun all lawyers as they are more liable to corruption than other men." In late 1783, Alexander Gillon (merchant), Henry Peronneau (merchant), Benjamin Waller (schoolmaster), Benjamin Cudsworth and Dr. James Fallon founded the Marine Anti-Britannic Society and the Whig Club of 600, opposed to all trade with Britain and British merchants. 3º Gillon found favor with Charleston mechanics and backcountry farmers allike by advocating confiscation of Loyalist property and removal of the state capital to the Congaree River in the interior. 3º The radical rhetoric continued under the aussieses of these two errors. The

"Secret Committee" for the Whig Club of 600 niled against privilege and monopolization of office. A few "wealthy families," they argued, sought to destroy "republican equality of citizenship" by introducing "family influence into the government," and establishing an "odious aristocracy over their betters." This, of course,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>South Carolina Gazette and Public Advertiser, July 9, 1785; <u>Charleston Evening</u> Gazette, August 25, 1786.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>See Elias Ball Jr. to Elias Ball, May 15, 1784, Elias Ball XIV Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston; John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, April 15, 1784, Henry Laurens Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Alexander Gillon to Dear Colonel, November 17, 1788, Robert W. Gibbes Autograph Book of the Revolution, South Caroliniana Library, Gillon was elected to the South Carolinian Holzary, Gillon was elected to the South Carolinian Holzary, Gillon was elected to the South Carolina House in 1787 from both Charleston and Saxe-Gotha in the backcountry. He chose to represent Saxe-Gotha and from that point became a firm ally of the backcountry. For Gillon, see Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey et al., eds., Souther Carolina Book of Charles and Carolina Places (Preferensentatives, S. Votelsky, Colombia Sc. University of South Carolina Places (Preferensentatives, S. Votelsky, Colombia Sc. University), 1951. For the Marine Auth-Britannis Society, see Clow, "Gebord Rutledge," 190, Melsney, Acadama Burks, 105-107; Samuel A. Lilly, "The Culture of Revolutionary Charleston," Ph.D. Basseration, Mismal University, 1972, 484.

was a thinly-veiled attack on the Rutledge and Pinckney families, and might have applied equally to any number of other wealthy families who were well connected and well placed in government. The Whig Club further warned that "enormous wealth is seldom the associate of pure and disinterested virtue. Elect no wealthy candidate." Voters should hold their legislators accountable, and no man ought to be elected who refused to abide by the wishes of his constituents. And finally, "above all, never place confidence in or take your political creed from lawyers—that double-tongued race of men who are bred up to chicanery and deceit." This torrent of openly democratic, anti-aristocratic language shocked and frightened Charleston's old guard, who had never faced such harsh retoric in any ne-war Charleston newsneers. 11

The elite retaliated by denouncing the radicals as 'an assemblage of drunken tuvern-keepers, Mountehank doctors, petitfogging attorneys and necessitious speculators." Dinn Rutledge hotty responded that Carolinians did not want "a simple democracy or [a government] verging toward it." His brother Edward Rutledge urged his colleagues to hold fast: "If the field is to be abandoned by men of virtue from the clamour of the worthless the condition of humanity would be vereiched indeed." If

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser. September 16, 1784.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>See the excellent discussion of the William Thompson-John Rutledge affair and the anti-aristocratic sentiment it stirred up in Michael E. Stevens, "Legislative Privilege in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina," <u>William and Mary Quarterly</u> 46 (January 1989): 71-92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, November 20, 1784.

<sup>33</sup>Ouoted in Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 118.

Charleston's true leaders united, he said, "I am convinced that sooner or later they will vanquish their enemies, and leave to themselves and their posterity all the ends of good government." <sup>54</sup>

Historians have disagreed over the importance and extent of these threats to Charleston's established leaders. Despite the reaction of contemporaries, Jerome J.

Nadelhaft describes the demonstrations of 1783-1784 as nothing more than "relatively peaceful protest[s] against the acts of the legislature." John C. Melency cautions historians not to read too much class conflict into the artisanal tumults, arguing that they reacted primarily to policy towards Loyalist, British merchants, and Tories. "Richard Brent Clow, in his biography of Edward Rutledge, argues that lowecountry leaders feared backcountry opposition more than the Marine Anti-Britannic Society, because the execution of the state of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>Edward Rutledge to John Jay, November 12, 1786, in Henry P. Johnston, ed., The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay, 4 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1890-1893), 3:217.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Nadelhaft, <u>Disorder of War</u>, 110.

<sup>36</sup>Meleney, Aedanus Burke, 108.

<sup>37</sup>Clow, "Edward Rutledge," 195-196.

<sup>38</sup> Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 121-124.

no doubt that they did question the aristocracy, privilege, and unquestioned supremacy of Charleston's traditional leaders. They challenged not the political and economic system, but the established rulers. Artisans, mechanics, and smaller merchants sought political equality and economic inclusiveness, not class warfare. They objected to the fact that wealthy leaders, far from being "disinterested," in fact looked after no one's interest but their own. As William Hornby wrote in 1784, "in these days we are equal citizens of a DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, in which jealously and opposition must naturally exist, while there exists a difference in the minds, interests, and sentiments of mankind."39 This oppositionist rhetoric represents nothing less than the transition from deferential elite politics to self-interested democracy. As Gordon S. Wood has argued, this recognition of self-interest in American politics was one of the most radical political innovations of the American Revolution, for it challenged "the entire classical tradition of disinterested public leadership and set forth a rationale for competitive democratic politics." The lower orders did not object to wealth, per se, only to self-interested wealthy elites pretending to be virtuous and disinterested. The behavior and rhetoric of Charleston dissidents in the 1780s very singularly reveals the extent of the political radicalism of the American Revolution 40

<sup>39</sup> Gazette of the State of South Carolina, July 29, 1784.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup>For a discussion of the development of interest-group representation and the recognition of self-interest, see Gordon S. Wood, <u>The Radicalism of the American</u> Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 245-247, 252-259.

In the midst of all this activity, and partly because of it, the planter-dominated legislature incorporated the city of Charleston on August 13, 1783. Incorporation had been proposed several times in the 1770s for various reasons, but the colonial legislature never acted. South Carolina historians generally agree that incorporation represented a counter-revolutionary move by lowcountry leaders to check the growing disturbances in Charleston's streets. The original motion to incorporate the town, however, had been made in the spring, before the disturbances of July. At that time lawmakers argued the move was necessary "from the extent, growing trade and opulence of this metropolis." The legislature appointed a joint committee to meet during the summer, and the bill for incorporation was brought in for the session that met from July 7 to August 13, 1783.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser. August 16, 1783; South Carolina Weekly Gazette. August 16, 1783; Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., The Statutes at Large of South Carolina, 10 vols. (Columbia SC: A.S. Johnston, 1838-1841), 7:97-101.

<sup>&</sup>quot;See South Carolina Gazette, January 25, 1770, November 12, 1772, February 15, March 8, 1773. See also Pauline Maier, "The Charleston Mob and the Evolution of Popular Politics in Revolutionary South Carolina, 1765-1784," Perspectives in American History 4 (1970): 191.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Theodorn J. Thompson, ed., Journals of the House of Representatives, 17831783. The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 289-290; Committee of Conference Report Concerning the Incorporation of Charles Town, March 1783, Committee Reports, 1776-1866, Records of the General Assembly, SCDA of the Concerning the Incorporation of Charles Town, March 1783, Committee Reports, 1776-1866, Records of the General Assembly, SCDA of the Concerning the Incorporation of Charles Town, March 1783, Committee Reports, 1776-1866, Records of the General Assembly, SCDA of the Concerning the Incorporation of Charles Town, March 1783, Committee Reports, 1776-1866, Records of the General Assembly, SCDA of the Charles of C

<sup>&</sup>quot;The original motion was made on March 1, 1783, after Governor Benjamin Guerard called for incorporation to ensure storager measure for preventing fires. See Governor's Messages, March 1, 1783, Governor's Messages, 1783-1850, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH. For the passage of the act of incorporation, see Journals of the House of Representatives. 1783-1784, 200, 214-215, 319, 324, 331, 337, 347, 351, 370.

Historians assume that because the act gave the new city government strong powers to deal with riots that Charleston was incorporated largely because of the summer disturbances. Actually, the summer uprisings were the occasion, but not the primary reason, for Charleston's incorporation. Moreover, as Jon C. Teaford has pointed out, no less than twenty-five towns along the Atlantic seaboard received charters of incorporation between 1775 and 1789. Other Southern towns incorporated during this period included Alexandria, Virginia (1779), Winchester, Virginia (1779), Fredericksburg, Virginia (1781), Richmond, Virginia (1782), Savannah, Georgia (1789), and Georgetown. Maryland (1789). During these post-war years, Teaford notes, Americans "discarded the model of urban government inherited from medieval Europe and substituted an ideal which determined the course of municipal development up to the present."45 Indeed. contemporaries noted that "the General Assembly has now incorporated this town on principles very different from Royal Charters, and on a basis the most liberal for a free and independent people."46 Incorporation was not simply a reactionary measure. Charleston had become more of an administrative problem than the legislature could reasonably handle. Policing the city's large slave and maritime population, maintaining city markets, renairing streets, and regulating the harbor all required more time and attention than the legislature could spare. The South Carolina House, undistracted by war

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Jon C. Teaford, The Municipal Revolution in America: Origins of Modern Urban Government. 1659-1825 (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 64, vii.
See also Merrill Jensen, The New Nation: A History of the United States During the Confederation, 1781-1789 (New York: Vintage Books, 1950), 118-122.

<sup>46</sup> South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, August 16, 1783.

and no longer answerable to London, simply turned over the government of Charleston to a city council vested with strong police and regulatory powers. One local newspaper hailed the act as beginning "a new era in Charleston-may it be propitious to its rising glory, increasing commerce, and growing opulence."

The act of incorporation divided the city into thirteen wards, and the city would now be governed by a council of thirteen wardens and an intendant (or mayor) elected from one of the wardens. "I The city council controlled all of the powers formerly vested in the various commissioners and had extraordinary powers to make all laws necessary to secure "peace, order, and good government." Suffrage was broad: all white males who paid a tax equal to three shillings could vote. "I The city held its first elections in early September 1783 and elected Richard Hutson as the first intendant. "I The first city council included: James Neilson, Thomas Bee, Alexander Alexander, Bernard Beckman, Joshua Ward, Thomas Heyward, John Mathews, George Flage, Thomas Radeliffe Jr., and John

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., September 13, 1783.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>The boundaries of these wards can be found in <u>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser</u>, August 16, 1783; "Charleston 1670-1883," <u>Yearbook, City of Charleston</u>, 1883 (Charleston SC: News and Courier Book Presses, 1883), 467.

Ooper and McCord, Statutes at Large of South Carolina, 7:97-98; Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston, in the State of South Carolina, Passed in the First Year of Incorporation of the City (Charleston SC: J. Miller, 1784); Teaford, Municipal Revolution, 66.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, September 2, September 13, 1783.

Lewis Gervais. Hutson, educated at the College of New Jersey (Princeton), practiced law in Charleston and owned over 2,300 acres and 17 slaves in neighboring St. Andrews parish. He had served in the state legislature on and off since 1776 and had signed the Articles of Confederation as a member of the Continental Congress. Exiled to St. Augustine during the British occupation, he returned to serve as lieutenant governor of South Carolina in 1782. He was, needless to say, a staunch member of Charleston's ruling elite.<sup>23</sup>

The new government acted quickly in the first few months of incorporation to restore order to Charleston and to keep the streets quiet in the evenings. The council appointed constables, passed laws "governing mariners and seamen within the city" (many of whom were suspected of participating in the July disturbances), established a nightly guard and town watch, and passed several ordinances regulating slave behavior. Where the less, the incorporated city government did not entirely succeed in preventing demonstrations or in choking the voices of opposition. Street uprisings continued in the summer of 1744, and a frustrated Governor Guerard called out the militia, amerity

<sup>&</sup>quot;The Government of the City of Charleston, 1682-1882," Yearbook. City of Charleston, 1881 (Charleston SC: News and Courier Book Presses, 1881), 367-368. Neilson and Alexander were merchants, Beekman, Flagg, and Radcliffe were artisans; the balance were lawyers, planters, or both.

<sup>363</sup> Bailey and Cooper, <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House</u>, 3:364-366; Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, ed., <u>Dictionary of American Biography</u>, 22 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1958), 9:443-444; Jerry Kail, comp., <u>Who Wass Who During the American Revolution</u> (Indianapolis IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), 420.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, October 7, October 14, 1783, July 20, 1784; Ordinances of the City Council, 21-24.

declaring that "government in the city seems lost." Even the state militia could not be relied upon; many citizen-soldiers sympathized with Charleston's lower ranks and defled orders to turn out. Ultimately, Thomas Pinckney and several other members of the city elite mounted up and quelled the demonstrations themselves. Critics charged that city officials had been too quick to label peaceful demonstrations "turnults" and "riots" and had too hastily requested state intervention.

While the incorporation certainly relieved the legislature from the mundane details of city administration, many citizens thought the incorporated city now had too much power. Much of this opposition to strong city government was linked, of course, to the rising voices of democratic equality discussed above. Alexander Gillen's Marine Anti-Britannic Society and Whige Club of 6000 led the opposition to the city council, and Gillon openly challenged Richard Hutson for the intendant's position in the Fall 1784 elections. Gillon faced vitrolic criticism from conservative opponents who denounced him as a representative of anarchy, disorder, and riots. A vote for Hutson, conversely, according to the aristocrats, would restore to power "men eminent and tried for public and private virtue and prove the voice of the citizen to be inimical to tumultuary, factious, and lawless proceedings." Christopher Gadsden publicly blamed Gillon for the summer demonstrations and charged him in the Charleston press with "govern[ng] and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, July 10, 1784; Edwards, ed., Journals of the Privy Council, 116-119.

<sup>55</sup> South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, September 7, 1784.

influenc[ing] a few weak and deluded men." Gadsden was a veteran of the Liberty Tree demonstrations of the 1760s and 1770s but had staunchly supported government and law and order since his confrontation with the loyalty oath demonstrators in 1778. He now told Samuel Adams, another veteran of the 1760s, "tis our common interest to support government and not let a few designing men set us by the ears for their own purposes," Gillion ultimately could not overcome the powerful combination of entrenched planters, large merchants, and lawyers allied against him, losing the election by a count of 387-260. Though Hutson's supporters hailed his victory as "law and liberty trampling on anarchy and tyranny," Gillon's defeat did not end opposition to aristocratic government in Charleston. Voters later elected Gillon, Benjamin Waller, and Dr. John Budd, all

<sup>56</sup> See Gadsden's essays in <u>Gazette of the State of South Carolina</u>, May 6, July 17, August 5, 1784.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Gadsden to Samuel Adams, August 18, 1784, in Walsh, ed., <u>Writings of Christopher Gadsden</u>, 239. For Gadsden's evolving (or consistent, depending upon the historian) views on opposition to government, see Richard Walsh, "Christopher Gadsden: Radical or Conservative Revolutionary?" <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 63 (1962): 195-203.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Naclehaft, <u>Disorders of War</u>, 119. Naclehaft points out that the 647 votes cast in this circy election probably presents about 50 percent of the eligible electorate, which was a high turnout. In the circy elections of 1786 and 1787, only 275 men voted, and in 1788 less than 425. Exact population figures for 1784 are unknown, but in 1790 the city's population was 16,539, of whom 2,810 (17) percent) were free white males over sixteen. Of these, no foreign merchants or factors or native males under 2 could vote, nor could males over 21 who did not pay a three-shilling tux. See Nasélehaft, <u>Disorders of War</u>, 117, 251 a. 65. For votes in city elections, see <u>Charlesson Morning per and Daily Advertiser</u>, September 12, 1786, "Poll Lists, Charleston Municipal Elections, 1787," South Carolinal Historical Magazing & Ginnaury 1595. 449–61, Citi Cagazte and Daily Advertiser, September 30, 1788. Population figures are from Heads of Families at the First Census, South Carolina.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, September 14, 1784.

prominent in the Marine Anti-Britannic Society and outspoken critics of the government, as Charleston representatives to the state House of Representatives. There they continued their attacks upon aristocratic city government, and Gillon cast a vote in 1789 for removal of the capital to Columbia.<sup>60</sup>

Critics of city government continued their opposition throughout the 1780s but restricted their voices primarily to newspapers and legislative petitions. The bulk of this opposition came from artisans and mechanics who used the rhetoric of republicanism to oppose the "arbitrary and despotic system of city laws." During the post-war years, advocates of strong municipal government and supporters of political and civil liberties fought similar battles in other newly-chartered cities. (In Charleston, over 170 artisans and mechanics asked that the incorporation be abolished and a new government established that would not be "dissonant to Revolution principles, derogatory to the rights of American freemen, [and] subversive to our constitution." These protesters railed against the "leaven of that garbage of monarchy, those tinselled trappings of royalty which the republican Freemen of this state have but lately shaken off!." Others

<sup>6</sup>ºLAIK Emerson Adams, ed., Journals of the House of Retrosentatives, 1785-1786. The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1979), 607-608. As mentioned earlier, by 1789 Gillon was representing the backcountry Saxe Gohad district. Dr. John Budd was still sitting for Charleston, and he joined all but one of his colleagues in voting to keep the capital in Charleston, debejoined all but one of his colleagues in voting to keep the capital in Charleston, despite his opposition to the excesses of the city government. See Michael E. Stewnsen, ed., Journal of the House of Remeasuratives, 1789-1790. The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 60-62.

<sup>61</sup> See Teaford, Municipal Revolution, 67-69.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup>Petitions from Inhabitants of the City of Charleston, March 1, 1787, Petitions, SCDAH; Michael E. Stevens, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1787-1788</u>,

denounced high city taxes and called the city council "an engine of oppression in the hands of a potent few to Lord it over the equal rights of other oppressed fellow citizens of Charleston." Over 190 of the city's elite responded to these charges with a petition of their own supporting the city government and praising the "impartial and disinterested" city leaders. "A Surprisingly, the committee appointed to consider the petitions agreed that the city's charter vested too much power in the city council but failed to offer any possible solutions or alternatives. The House took no further action."

Despite the survival of city government, it is clear that Charleston's traditional clied did not rule unchallenged within the city (or, as we shall we see, within the state) in the immediate post-war years. To be sure, Charleston's merchant-planter-lawyer cohort continued to supply the bulk of city wardens and intendants, but they no longer governed free from criticism or accountability. The democratic rhetoric of these years made lowcountry nabobs alarmed and fearful, and the simultaneous backcountry pressure for more extensive constitutional and political reform increased their anxiety. By 1785 city leaders were convinced that Charleston's continued dominance perhaps would be more

The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 169-171.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup>Petition of a Number of Inhabitants of the City of Charleston, March 1, 1787, Petitions, SCDAH; <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1787-1788</u>, 169.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>Petition of Citizens of Charleston Praising City Government, March 12, 1787, Petitions, SCDAH; <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1787-1788, 209.

<sup>6&#</sup>x27;See Report on revision of charter of Charleston, March 12, 1787, <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1787-1788, 208. City government opponent Dr. John Budd from Charleston read the committee report.

economic than political, and leaders began investing in improved intrastate transportation links. The Revolution presented new opportunities for commercial expansion and economic improvement, and both urban and rural Carolinians rushed to take advantage of them. By embracing and encouraging economic radicalism, city leaders helped to blunt the extent of democratic radicalism, and by doing so they ensured that Charleston would continue to be the economic capital, even after Columbia became the political capital in 1790.

## .....

As mentioned earlier, Charleston's planters welcomed British merchants in late 1782 because of the credit they offered and the need to rebuild and replenish plantations. Most planters went quickly and deeply into debt promising future crops in return for slaves, plantation utensils, and luxury items. "Crop failures in 1784, 1785, and 1786 compounded an already bad situation. Jacob Read's plight is suggestive of the experience of many post-war Charlestonians. Educated as a lawyer in Savannah and London, Read served as a captain in the Charleston militia and three years as a state

<sup>&</sup>quot;Particularly useful here is the correspondence between Dr. Robert Pringle of Charleston and his brother-in-law William Freeman F. and William Freeman Sr. of Bristol. Pringle quit his medical practice and used his family connections in Bristol to enablish an encantile business in Charleston specifically to capitalize on the post-war needs of Carolina planters. See especially "Article of Agreement of Copartnership between Robert Pringle and William Freeman," June 1783, Robert Pringle in William Freeman, "to 1873, Robert Pringle William Freeman Sr. to Robert Pringle, November 13, 1783, Moster Pringle in Swr. Edward Patchins, December 27, 1783, William Freeman Sr. to Robert Pringle, February 20, 1784, William Freeman Ir. to Robert Pringle, March 4, 1784, Robert Pringle to William Freeman, unduct, Robert Pringle to William Freeman, un

attorney. During the occupation of Charleston, the British sent him into exile in St. Augustine. After the war he began rebuilding his Christ Church parish plantation, Hobcaw, while simultaneously representing Charleston in the state legislature, the Privy Council, and in the Confederation Congress. He went on to serve as United States Senator from 1795-1800.67 Despite his connections and his 1785 marriage to heiress Catherine Van Horne, daughter of wealthy New York merchant David Van Horne, Read found it necessary in 1787 to plead with London merchants for a loan to rebuild his Charleston home and nearby plantation. A "considerable income from rents" and Read's law practice enabled him to provide for his family and slaves, but his plantations had suffered through three years of bad crops. If John Tunno (brother of Charleston merchant Adam Tunno) could loan £1,500 pounds, Read promised to "mortgage houses in Charleston, lands & slaves to four times the value and pledge my Honour to you for an exact and punctual compliance." Though almost no Carolinians could pay their debts during these years. Read assured Tunno he could produce 700 barrels of rice in 1787 and repay the loan by 1789.68 Read no doubt found this entire exchange humbling, but his experience was in fact all too typical for South Carolina planters whose continued good fortunes and careers often hinged on the success of next year's crop. South Carolina merchants imported over £1,500,000 in 1783-1784, and exported only £640,000.69 The

<sup>67</sup> Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House, 3:597-599.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>Jacob Read to John Tunno, May 19, 1787, Jacob Read Papers, South Caroliniana Library. See also John Paul Grimke to Alexander Fraser, January 1, 1786, Grimke Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>69</sup>Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 152.

ruinous economic conditions of post-war South Carolina forced many planters into debt, and they then adopted extraordinary measures to fend off their creditors.

Within a few years the relationship between Charleston planters and British merchants had soured. By 1785, planter debts contracted in 1783 and 1784 came due, and planters joined the rising chorus of voices against these supposed vultures who descended upon South Carolina after the war and brought disaster and economic ruin with them. Never mind that the planters had been primarily responsible for the original agreement with the British merchants and had agreed to their request for an extension despite the opposition of native merchants and artisans. Few took Henry Laurens' advice to "cease from complaining and be thankful for what is left." Laurens could afford to be forgiving. He lived rent free, "my lands will support me and I am free from debt. I have not so much as I had [but] I have enough." Others were not so fortunate. The enormous importation of slaves in the immediate post-war years drained the state of much its specie. Lacking hard money, planters stopped paying their debts, and many merchants thus could not make timely remittances to their London suppliers. 71 One historian estimates that

Fitenty Laurens to William Bell, March 31, 1785, in Mabel Webber, ed., "Letters for Henry Laurents to William Bell (Philadelphia," 2004. Carolian Historical Massaring 24 (January-April 1923): 3; Henry Laurens to John Bannister, June 4, 1785, William Gilmore Simms Collection of Henry Laurens Papers, Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts, microfilm, South Caroliniana Library (hereafter cited as Kendall Collection).

<sup>&</sup>quot;Much of the surviving correspondence between London and Charleston mechanis from the years 1783-1781 is filled with complaints about non-payment of debts. Particularly instructive is the correspondence between London merchant Isaac King and his Charleson attorney Johns Ward. When King died in 1797 he was still looking for payment on much of the South Carolina debt contracted during this period. See Isaac King Lettrebook, South Caroliniana Library, See also Gervais and Owen to

South Carolinians owed at least £2,000,000 sterling by 1785.77 The result was a flurry of lawsuits, and local attorney Timothy Ford noted that many planters "were torn to pieces by legal process."77 It appeared that some of the most valuable property in the state would suddenly default into the hands of the former enemy. From all corners of the state, debtors demanded that the state government intervene and put a stop to this outrage.

Some farmers took matters into their own hands, preventing sheriff's sales and even halting court proceedings in Camden. No By late 1785 the debtor crisis threatened to overturn every economic benefit gained by the war. Charleston attorney Henry William

Leonard De Neufville, April 13, 1786, John Lewis Gervais Papers, South Carolinians Library; Thomas Mornis to Alexander Nesbitt, May 13, 1785, Robert Stawart to Alexander Nesbitt, June 22, 1786, Thomas Morris Papers, South Caroliniana Library; Henry Laurens to James Bourdieu, May 6, 1785, Kendlal Collection; John Paul Grinke to Alexander Fraser Sr., January 2, 1786, Grimke Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>72</sup>Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 152-153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup>Barnwell, ed., "Diary of Timothy Ford," 194-195. Ford, from New Jeney, opened a law practice in Charleston in the mid-1/80s with his bordner-in-al-will Henry William DeSaussure. Ford, as on outsider to Charleston society, made several shrewd observations on the manners and customs of South Carollinians, and his first hand account of the bitter battle between planters and merchants survives in his diary. It is an excellent discussion of the entire debtor-law resis. See also Raph Jarard to Timous Jefferson, July 1, 1/86, in "Letters of Ralph Izard," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 2 (July 1901):

DeSaussure perhaps understated the problem when he wrote that "we are it is true independent. But we are not yet a happy people. The want of money is the great cry, the want of economy is the great want." <sup>175</sup>

By late 1785 Governor William Moultrie warmed the legislature that it must take extraordinary steps to stave off financial disaster, and the lawmakers, almost all of whom were deeply in debt, lost no time in passing a series of debtor relief laws.<sup>38</sup> Planters and farmers from all sections publicly supported this move, though privately many worried that perhaps the failure to pay debts might do more damage to South Carolina's financial reputation in the international community than the street demonstrations of 1783 and 1784. John Lloyd, president of the state senate and a former merchant, thought that "the interference of the legislature in the private contracts of individuals cannot in my opinion be justified upon any plea whatsoever [and will] forever blast our national character with foreigners." Others voiced similar concerns. Nevertheless, subsequent legislatures

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup>Henry William DeSaussure to John Coburn, June 17, 1786, DeSaussure Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>For extensive discussion of the various debtor relief laws passed between 1785 and 1789, see Robert A Becker, "Salars Populs Suprema Lex? Public Peace and South Carolina Debtor Relief Laws, 1783-1788," South Carolina Historical Manazine 80 (January 1979): 65-75, which contains an excellent discussion of the Pine Barrer Act and other laws; Nadethart, <u>Disorders of War.</u> 155-172; Narbel N. Klein, <u>Unification of a Slive State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Refeccuentry</u>, 1760-1808 (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 134-135; Clow, "Edward Rutledge," 201-209; McDonough, "Gadsden and Laurens," 459-464; Zahniser, <u>Charles Cotteworth Pinkare</u>, 84-87.

<sup>&</sup>quot;John Lloyd to "My Dear Nephew," April 15, 1786, John Lloyd Letters, Charleston Library Society, Charleston. Lloyd, a native of Bristol, England, was a pre-war partner of George Ingliss and George Abbot Hall in the firm of Inglis, Lloyd, and Hall, 1759-1764, and in Inglis, Lloyd, and Company until 1773. N. Louise Bailey, ed.,

continued to come to the aid of debtors throughout the remainder of the 1780s, even after the adoption of the United States Constitution supposedly made such laws unconstitutional.<sup>78</sup>

South Carolina's enormous debt and Britain's seeming stranglehold on Charleston's trade lay behind the lowcountry's almost unanimous support for a stronger federal government in 1787.7º Every economic and political group in Charleston favored the passage of the United States Constitution and a stronger federal government because each group had something to gain. 4º Planters wanted the government to regulate trade, open up British ports to South Carolina commerce. 1º while reducine Carolina debt to

Biographical Directors of the South Carolina Seaste. 1776-1985, 3 vols. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 2,243-344. See also David Ramays's attempts to explain South Carolina's stay laws to the international community in Ramssys to thromas Jefferson, Paris, April 7, 1878, Ramssys to John Adams, London, April 7, 1878, in Brumbouse, ed., "Ramssy Writings," 110-1111, Henry Laurens to Michael Hillegas, April 24, 1786, Laurens to Adapta Laward May, January 9, 1787, Henry Laurens Papers, South Carolina Historical Society; Francis Kinloch to Thomas Boone, March 14, 1786, Gilbert, ed., "Elects of Francis Kinloch to Thomas Boone, March 14, 1786, Gilbert, ed., "Elects of Francis Kinloch "99.

"See Arthur H. Shaffer, To Be An American: David Ramsay and the Making of the American Consciousness (Columba SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 82-83; Mark D. Kuplanoff, "How Federalist Was South Carolina in 1787-887" in David R. Chesnutt and Clyck N. Wilson, eds., Elm Meaning of South Carolina history: Essays in Honor of George C. Rogers Jr. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 187.

<sup>79</sup>For Charleston calls for a national constitutional convention, see <u>Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser</u>, October 23, 1786.

<sup>85</sup>The Constitution was published in Charleston in the <u>Columbian Herald</u>. October 2, 1787. See also Ernest M. Lander Jr., "The South Carolinians at the Philadelphia Convention," <u>South Carolina Historical Measurine</u> 57 (1956): 134-155.

<sup>81</sup>British West Indian ports had been closed to American commerce in 1783. During the Constitutional Convention, South Carolinian John Rutledge put it bluntly: British merchants. Merchants too wanted better regulation of trade and abolition of state interference between debtor and creditor. Artisans and mechanics wanted protection from foreign manufactures and encouragement of native industry. There can be little doubt that South Carolina's late eighteenth-entury "nationalism"—so often hailed by historians who seek to explain South Carolina's transformation to staunch sectionalism in the nineteenth century—was based primarily on defense of economic and sectional self-interests and was in fact no more "nationalistic" than Calboun's critique of the Tariff of 1832. As Mark D. Kaplanoff has quite rightly argued, South Carolina ratified the Constitution because it hoped to reap considerable economic benefits without making considerable secrifices. \*\*

Merchant Adam Gilchrist, secretary of Charleston's Chamber of Commerce, lamented the annual passage of debtor laws and hoped that the "federal plan when adopted will set all matters in proper order." One Charleston editorial encouraged

<sup>&</sup>quot;We need to secure the West India trade to this country. That was the great object, and a navigation act was necessary for obtaining it." George C. Rogers Ir., "South Carolina Ratifies the Federal Constitution," <u>Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association</u> 1961, 50, 52.

<sup>&</sup>quot;For an excellent discussion of the South Carolina's mythical "transformation" from one of the most nationalistic states to one of the most sectional and provincial, see Kaplanoff, "How Federalist Was South Carolina in 1787-887" 67, 89. See also Pierce Butler to "Dear Sir" (grobably Thomas Flixammon), April 30, 1736, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Series 1, South Carolina Historical Society, Robert E. Shalhope, "South Carolina in the Founding Era: A Localist Perspective," South Carolina Historical Magazine 80 (April 1988): 102-113.

s3 Adam Gilchrist to Coll MacGregor, February 11, 1788, Adam Gilchrist Papers, South Caroliniana Library. Gilchrist, the son-in-law of city government critic Dr. John Budd, had strong mercantile ties in Philadelphia and New York. He would go on to become actively involved in the Santec Canal Company, the Charleston branch of the

raiffication to ensure that "one of the greatest of human revolutions will be accomplished 
—a free government erected by a free people, capable of reviving our trade, protecting our 
manufactures, and rendering us happy at home and respected abroad." David Ramsay 
was perhaps the most eloquent of all in prophesying the political, commercial, and 
economic benefits that South Carolina (and especially Charleston) would reap by passage 
of the Constitution. He argued that it would encourage and facilitate internal 
improvements that would unite Carolina's rivers, build new roads and bridges, and 
forever link the hinterlands to the metropolis, ensuring Charleston's and South Carolina's 
continued dominance in the Lower South. <sup>15</sup>

Though South Carolina ratified the Constitution by a wide majority, it still faced considerable opposition within the state, primarily from backcountry leaders who saw in the document a strong central government that would protect the interests of the lowcountry elite. Backcountry opposition never manifessed itself in any effective way, however. Upcountry anti-federalists were less organized, less skilled in the art of

United States Bank, and invested heavily in backcountry lands in Ninety-Six district and Orangeburgh District. See <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House</u>, 4:232-233.

<sup>\*</sup>Broadside on the Ratification of the Constitution by South Carolina, 1788, Early American Imprints # 21469.

<sup>&</sup>quot;David Rumsey, An Ornton, Prepared for Delivery Before the Inhabitants of Charleston, Assembled on the 27th Offur, 1788, 10 Celebrate the Adoption of the New Constitution By South Carolina (Bowen & Co., 1788), 3-6. See also his An Address to the Freeman of South Carolina to the Subject of the Federal Constitution (1788), 6-7, 9; Souther, 10 Et al., American, 15-18, (Fobert I. Brundous, ed., "Pavid Ramsyon the Ratification of the Constitution in South Carolina, 1787-1788," Journal of Southern Highst 9 (November 1493): 549-552.

parliamentary debate, and less eloquent than the lowcountry lawyers who opposed them. Ironically, lowcountry planter Rawlins Lowndes emerged as the most prominent and vocal anti-federalist. His objections, however, had more to do with fears of a strong central government created at the expense of states' rights than with backcountry concerns over the document's protection of lowcountry wealth and property. <sup>56</sup>

The real debate over the ratification of the Constitution occurred in the state legislature in January 1788." Even then the only substantive issue was the location of the ratifying convention. Backcountry legislators, already hard at work attempting to move the capital, resisted holding the convention in Charleston. They realized that what little hope they had of blocking ratification depended on debating the issue outside the hegemonic sway of the seaport metropolis. The vote on the issue was extremely close, but Charleston won by one vote, 76-75. Because each parish and district sent the same number of delegates to the ratifying convention that it sent to the General Assembly, lowcountry and Federalist dominance was assured. By the time the ratifying convention met in May ratification had become a fait accomptl. The convention met in Charleston from May 12-24, 1788, and Federalists encountered "trifling opposition." Backcountry

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup>See Carl J. Vipperman, <u>The Rise of Rawlins Lowndes</u>, 1721-1800 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1978), 240-253.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>See <u>Debates Which Arose in the House of Representatives of South Carolina</u>. On the Constitution Framed For the <u>United States, By a Convention of Delegates</u> <u>Assembled at Philadelphia (Charleston Sc. City Gazette, 1788).</u>

<sup>48</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1788-1789, 330-332.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup>Edward Rutledge to John Jay, June 20, 1788, <u>Correspondence of John Jay</u>, 3:339.

anti-federalists attempted to postpone consideration until the fall, by which time they hoped either to have drafted proposed amendments to the existing document, or, better yet, written a counter-constitution at another national convention. When this effort failed by forty-six votes, the Federalists quickly cut off debate and overwhelmingly ratified the Constitution 149-73.<sup>30</sup> The vote was of course sectional. The planter and mercantile interests of the lowcountry overwhelmed the disorganized backcountry opposition, with Charleston and the surrounding six parishes voting monolithically 73-0 in favor of the Constitution. Overall, the eighteen lowcountry parishes voted 121-16 in favor of ratification, while the fourteen upcountry parishes opposed the new government 57-28.

Aedanus Burke, a lowcountry lawyer and judge representing an upcountry district, bitterly denounced the outcome as the natural result of holding the convention in Charleston, where "not fifty inhabitants (were) unfriendly to the new government." Burke complained that almost everyone in Charleston, "the merchants, the mechanics, the populace and the mob," supported the Constitution. Furthermore, Charleston nabobs threw open their houses to entertain and influence backcountry members, ensuring ratification "notwithstanding 4/5 of the people do from their souls detest it." Though

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> A.S. Salley Jr., Journal of the Convention of South Carolina which Raiffeet the Constitution of the United States, May 2, 1288 (Altanta GA: Foote & Davies, 1928), 13-23, 39-49. See also Gabriel Manigault to Margaret Izard Manigault, May 22, 1788, Manigault Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society; Nadelhah, Djacoffers of War, 173-190; Meleney, Aedanus Burke, 139-151; Zahniser, Charlec Cotesworth Pinchengs, 88-101; Rogers, "South Carolina Raiffeet the Federal Constitution," 41-61; Robert M. Weir, "South Carolinians and the Adoption of the Federal Constitution," South Carolina Historical Society 119-889; 73-39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup>Aedanus Burke to John Lamb, June 23, 1788, John Lamb Papers, New York Historical Society, quoted in Nadelhaft, <u>Disorders of War</u>, 180-182.

Burke overstated the extent of opposition, it is clear that Charleston's considerable political, cultural, and economic influence proved ultimately decisive. Lowcountry leaders knew full well what they were doing when they insisted that the ratifying convention be held in the metropolis. They thus feared all the more the effects of moving the capital away from the seacoast and were determined that Charleston remain the capital of South Carolina.<sup>52</sup>

Backcountry efforts to relocate the state capital represented yet another in a series of challenges to lowcountry power throughout the 1780s. 

70 As we have seen, during the post-war years Charleston's elite stood down repeated challenges to its authority and continued hegemony in the city, state, and region. The incorporation of Charleston reinforced elite authority in the city, the passage of debtor laws and paper money served to stave off more serious dissensions throughout the state, and the establishment of a strong central government able to regulate trade and commerce effectively ensured a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>See David Ramsay, <u>The History of South Carolina. From Its Settlement in 1670, to the Year 1808</u>, 2 vols. (Charleston: David Longworth, 1809), 2:435-436.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>The Constitution of 1778 did not mention Charleston specifically as the "seat of government," leaving open the possibly that it might one day be changed. Francis of Newton Thorpe, ed., The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laxes of the States, Irritorious, and Colonies Now of Heretofore Forming the United States of America, 7 vols. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 62321. James Mayon, representing sinveys: Sci District in the backcountry, made the first proposal to move the capital inland on February 8, 1780. W. Edwin Hemphill et al., Journals of the General Assembly and House of Revengenshives, 1776-1780. The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina, 1970), 287. Another motion was made to relocate the capital on February 18, 1783. See Journals of the House of Representatives, 1783-1784. 156. See also Jerome J. Nadelhaft, "The Smarts of Involvious artimats" in Democratization of Revolutionary States in An Age of Uncertainty Chartoceville VA. University Press of Virginia, 1981), 86.

national government that would protect the interests of the coastal merchant elite. Charleston's traditional rulers remained in place, but their aristocratic dominance could no longer be taken for granted. The politicization of the lower political ordersparticularly urban artisans and backcountry farmers-had largely energyated their political triumphs during the post-war years. The American Revolution had democratized too many of the rank and file who "found it very difficult to fall back in the ranks."54 Lowcountry aristocrats were now on the defensive. Their unquestioned right to rule by virtue of wealth, lineage, and talents came under attack from all quarters. Urban artisans and backcountry farmers challenged the elite right to rule and repeatedly demanded a more inclusive, egalitarian government. Goose Creek planter Ralph Izard perhans represented lowcountry aristocratic political power at its zenith. Izard led a powerful political faction centered in St. James Goose Creek parish just north of Charleston. His daughters married Charleston attorney William Loughton Smith and Goose Creek planter Gabriel Manigault, and the Izard-Smith-Manigault faction virtually controlled this wealthy parish on the state and national level for the remainder of the eighteenth century Izard served as one of South Carolina's first Federalist senators, and Smith represented Charleston in Congress from 1788-1797.95 Izard haughtily dismissed demands for political reforms, sniffing that "our governments tend too much to democracy." "A handicraftsman thinks an apprenticeship necessary to make him acquainted with his

 $<sup>^{94} \</sup>rm The$  quote is from Edward Rutledge to John Jay, May 21, 1789, in Correspondence of John Jay, 3:368.

<sup>95</sup>See Rogers, Evolution of a Federalist, 124-134.

business," he complained, "but our backcountrymen are of opinion that a politician may be born such as well as a poet."

Having faced one challenge to their authority within Charleston, lowcountry leaders certainly wanted to avoid, if possible, an open battle with disaffected backcountry leaders. But backcountry demands for constitutional reforms began almost immediately after the war and continued throughout the 1780s. As the debtor crisis became more severe and widespread, constitutional reform became linked to demands for paper money. installment laws, and removal of the capital. The last demand, though often couched in terms of convenience, represented an open and direct challenge not only to the geographic location of the capital, but also to the lowcountry merchants and planters who ruled the city. In 1790, 80 percent of South Carolina's white population resided in the backcountry, yet by the apportionment of the Constitution of 1778, the backcountry held only 38 percent of the seats in the state House of Representatives. As David Ramsay wrote, "every principle of republicanism supported their claim." But lowcountry leaders had never earned a reputation for being even-handed and generous when their own political and economic interests hung in the balance. And many were convinced that their continued survival as a ruling class rested in part on Charleston's continued political dominance.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup>Ralph Izard to Thomas Jefferson, June 10, 1785, "Letters of Ralph Izard," 197-198

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>Ramsay, History of South Carolina, 2:435-436.

The Constitution of 1778 had promised a reapportionment of the legislature, based on population and taxable property, no later than 1785.98 Nevertheless, lowcountry leaders continued to resist any changes in part because they argued that while a majority of the state's population might reside above the fall line, the lowcountry continued to hold a majority of the state's wealth. And to their minds, of course, wealth was the only basis for determining a proper legislative apportionment. Population figures, they thought, should be taken into account, but many feared rising property taxes if the legislature was in fact proportioned equally. Their fears were partially realized by the Tax Act of 1784. The Tax Act of 1783 had placed a tax of one dollar on every one hundred acres of land, regardless of quality. Thus backcountry pine barrens paid the same tax as prime tidewater rice lands. Outlying lowcountry parishes joined with the backcountry to reverse this injustice the following year, however. The Tax Act of 1784 delivered two blows against lowcountry wealth: it taxed land according to its value and doubled the tax on slaves. A one-percent tax on the value of all lands doubled some lowcountry taxes; conversely, most backcountry taxes decreased.99 Charles Cotesworth Pinckney protested against the "proprietors of barren acres" passing laws "instead of persons possessed of real property,"100 and he joined other lowcountry leaders who fiercely resisted all demands for constitutional reform.

<sup>98</sup> Thorpe, Federal and State Constitutions, 6:3252.

<sup>99</sup>Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 125-126.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup>Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, February 4, 1786.

Another lowcountry objection concerned the lack of education in the backcountry. Some conceded that constitutional revisions might be necessary, even just, but should not be expected as long as backcountry youths continued to be "brought up deer-hunters and horse thleves for want of education." It was no coincidence that during these years many lowcountry leaders united to organize South Carolina's first college and advocated the creation of similar institutions throughout the state. The Mount Zion Society, formed to "promote science and advance literature in the remote parts of this state," petitioned the legislature in February 1785 for a college to be erected at Winnsborough, in Camden District. The Mount Zion state is the colleges not only in Charleston, but also in the backcountry at Winnsborough and Ninety-Six. Henry Laurens, among others, approved: "Our people are not inattentive to the rising generation, schools and seminaries are growing in different parts of the country even to the remotes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup>Aedanus Burke to Arthur Middleton, July 6, 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," 204.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup>See George C. Rogers Jr., "The College of Charleston and the Year 1785," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 86 (October 1985): 285-295.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1726, 148-149. See also the society's efforts in South Carolina Gueste and General Advertiser, July 24, 1784. The offices of the Mount Zion Society were Daniel Cannon, Charleston earpener and housewright representing Charleston in the General Assembly, Richard Huston, attorney and former intendant of Charleston, and William Hasell Gibbes, Charleston attorney and state legislator.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786, 180-181, 188, 189, 232-233, 237, 242, 249, 264.

hence I have great hopes the children will be wiser and better than their fathers. \*\*\*

Despite these well-intentioned efforts, however, only the College of Charleston ever really fulfilled its purpose. Not surprisingly, only Charleston could raise the necessary financial support before the era of state funding. Mount Zion College in Winnsborough operated for a short while and closed in 1795. The College of Cambridge in Ninety-Six never got off the ground. The first successful college in the backcountry was the South Carolina College (the University of South Carolina), founded on December 19, 1801. \*\*

Carolina College (the University of South Carolina), founded on December 19, 1801. \*\*

In the meantime, backcountry leaders did not sit idly by and wait for their sons' education to meet condescending lowcountry approval. On January 27, 1785, during the first session of the Sixth General Assembly, over 220 citizens from the District between the Broad and Catawba Rivers in the backcountry petitioned the House of Representatives for removal of the seat of government, county courts, a college, revision of the state constitution, and tobacco inspection warehouses. They asked that the new corpital "be fixed as centrical as possible for the ease and convenience of the community at large." Another petition from 106 "free citizens of this state" echoed the demands of the first. 167 A drird petition from 192 inhabitants of Ninety-Six District asked that the capital be relocated "as near the center of the state" as possible because of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup>Henry Laurens to Edward Bridgen, February 13, 1786, Henry Laurens Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>106</sup>Rogers, "College of Charleston," 293-294.

<sup>107</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786, 26-27.

inconvenience, time, and expense necessary to travel to Charleston. <sup>368</sup> Speaker John Faucheraud Grimke referred the petitions to a committee of eleven men, five from the lowcountry, six from the backcountry. It thus appeared likely that the petition would receive a favorable hearing. <sup>360</sup> Two of the lowcountry representatives, Aedanus Burke and Thomas Tudor Tucker, supported constitutional revision; another, Richard Hutson, served as an officer in the Mount Zion Society, which supported establishing a college in the backcountry. <sup>318</sup> Backcountry supporters could be eautiously optimistic.

The committee brought in its report ten days later. The House heard the report and postponed any further discussion for fifteen days. The speaker asked that during that time all absent members report to Charleston to attend the debate. In the meantime the committee reported fiavorably on the least controversial parts of the petitions, establishing additional tobacco inspection warehouses and a college in the backcountry. Finally, on February 22, 1785, the committee reported that the state constitution was "defective and faulty" and that a committee be appointed to recommend revisions. They further recommended that statewide elections should be held for a constitutional convention to meet in Camden, in the backcountry, the following December. Interestingly, a proposed motion to move the convention to Charleston falled 684-44. The committee refused to

toalbid., 194-195. This last petition was not received until March 7, 1785, more than a month after the first two and after the committee had already made its report. The committee reported that the matter was already before the House. Ibid., 196, 284-285.

<sup>109</sup>Tbid., 27, 601-608.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup>For Tucker, see Diana Dru Dowdy, "'A School For Stoicism': Thomas Tudor Tucker and the Republican Age," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 96 (April 1995): 102-118; Klein, <u>Unification</u> of a Slave State, 142.

make any recommendation regarding the state capital, however. Such an important decision, it argued, should be "referred to the convention of the people." The state senate dashed all hope for reform, however, when it disagreed with the House report on March 2 and refused to discuss or consider any of the proposed changes during the remainder of that session.

During the special session that met in the fall of 1785, seventy-two people from the lower part of Camden District petitioned for constitutional revision and removal of the capital to the center of the state. The speaker referred the petition to a committee of three: William Loughton Smith of St. James Goose Creek in the lowcountry, John Chesnut of the District Eastward of the Wateree River, and Dr. James Knox from the District Eetween Broad and Catawha rivers. Once again it looked as if the petition would at least get a favorable hearing in committee. Nevertheless, Governor William Moultrie had called this special session of the Assembly to deal with the burgeoning debtor crisis. The House was preoccupied and the committee recommended that their report be postponed until the next session of the legislature. Thus despite the work of backcountry petitioners and the appointment of favorable committees in the House, the capital remained in Charleston at the close of 1785, and the lowcountry continued to dominate the legislature.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786, 57, 71, 89, 126, 139-140, 179. The first session of the Sixth General Assembly began January 3 and ended March 25, 1783. A special session began September 20 and ended October 12, 1783. The second session began January 10 and ended March 22, 1786. Biographical Directory of the Houses, 12-02.

<sup>112</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786, 331, 335, 338.

Debate over removal of the capital began in earnest during the next session. On February 6, 1786, yet another petition, this one from the New Acquisition District, called for a new capital.<sup>10</sup> On February 22, 1786, the committee appointed the previous fall reported that a constitutional convention should be called and that "the next meeting of the General Assembly be held as near the center of the state as conveniency will admit." A committee appointed to decide on the best location recommended Camden, 125 miles northwest of Charleston.<sup>114</sup>

Camden was certainly a likely candidate for a new capital. It lay close to the confluence of the Wateree River and Pine Tree Creek on one of the main trading paths to the Catavoks Indians. The town served as a collection center for backcountry wheat and flour, which Camden merchants bought and forwarded on to Charleston. <sup>15</sup> One contemporary described it in 1785 as a "thriving place, where with good management much money might be yoked, and the trade of the country about it, and even far back of it, made to center here. <sup>116</sup> It would take more than an advantageous location and contomic potential to convince the lowcountry elite to relocate the capital, however.

Despite Ramsay's later assertion that "no private views could control the sovereign

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup><u>Did.</u>, 371. The text of this petition is not in the House Journals, but the <u>Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser</u>, February 6, 1786, notes that the legislature received a petition from New Acquisition concerning removal of the capital.

<sup>114</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786, 449, 451.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup>Joseph A. Ernst and H. Roy Merrens, "'Camden's Turrets Pierce the Skies!': The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies during the Eighteenth Century," <u>William and Mary Quarterly</u> 30 (October 1973): 549-579.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup>Richard Champion to Henry Laurens, July 22, 1785, Kendall Collection.

people from establishing their government where they pleased," lowcountry aristocrats would not stand by and lose their capital without a fight.<sup>137</sup> Charleston supporters marshaled their eloquence, political strength, and arrogance to engage in battle with the upcountry.

Many of the objections to moving the capital covered familiar ground. <sup>118</sup> Some had to do with convenience: the backcountry lacked adequate facilities for housing the assembly, no town except Charleston could provide sufficient lodging for members, public records would be at risk traveling long distances over dusty roads. Other objections re-echoed concerns about lack of educational institutions. Former governor John Mathews insisted that the legislature had received too few petitions to justify movine the careful. <sup>119</sup>

But the debate, of course, really centered around power. The location of the capital in one section or the other meant that members in one region could attend legislative sessions more conveniently and thus give greater weight and influence to laws and other legislation. A backcountry capital would mean more absentees from the lowcountry. Ralph Izard put it bluntly. Removal of the capital would "strengthen the country interest in a proportion of four to one," and he flatly opposed any lessening of

<sup>117</sup> Ramsay, History of South Carolina, 2:103.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup>See the debates over removal of the capital in <u>Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser</u>, March 3, March 11, 1786.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup>Tbid., March 3, 1786. Mathews cited only two petitions, one from Camden, the other from the New Acquisition, in his arguments. The Assembly, of course, received no less than five petitions with at least 600 signatures during the meeting of the Sixth General Assembly alone.

Charleston's power. Charleston was now and had always been the political, economic, and cultural capital of not only South Carolina, but of the entire Lower South. Was it not the only metropolis worthy of the name between Philadelphia and the West Indies? The wealth of enterprising merchants and rice and indigo planters had made it so, while Charleston's lawyers were responsible for the eminent quality of the state's laws. "It would be neither grateful or just," Izard imperiously argued, "to compel those gentlemen to travel 140 miles."120 Charles Cotesworth Pinckney defiantly defended lowcountry interests and dismissed the idea that men from good families with virtue, wealth, and political talents should concede power to "proprietors of barren acres," with presumably no pedigree, money, or political training. 121 Colleton County planter and Charleston lawyer Thomas Bee thought the economic capital should be the political capital. Charleston was the heart of trade and commerce, and neither ship captains nor foreign merchants desiring business with the legislature or governor should be compelled to travel 125 miles inland. 122 Edward Rutledge further dismissed backcountry complaints over convenience by sniffing that "country gentlemen" were more in the habit of traveling than "town gentlemen." 123 The capital thus should remain on the coast.

Lowcountry leaders were much mistaken if they thought the weight and influence of their opposition would halt all efforts to move the capital, however. Though eloquent

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., March 3, 1786.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., February 4, 1786. See also Zahniser, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, 107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup>Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, March 3, 1786.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

gentlemen like John Rutledge railed against any proposed move, backcountry reform advocates refused to be put off or intimidated. 124 Henry Laurens had complained in 1775 that "backwoodsmen," unaccustomed to "the formalities of parliament, moving, seconding, debating, committing, sauntering, reporting, amending, declaiming, recommitting, etc." expected public business to be completed "with extreme facility and no more words than are necessary in the bargain and sale of a cow."125 Perhaps they still lacked the eloquence of their lowcountry peers (and eloquence counted in an age when public speaking could make a man's career and reputation) but lordly Charleston nabobs could no longer expect humble deference from unsophisticated, uneducated backcountrymen. The experience of fighting a vicious partisan war in the backcountry coupled with the certainty that they had suffered and sacrificed much more than the rice kings and merchants in Charleston radicalized these "backwoodsmen" with notions of political equality that refused to bow down before wealth and privilege. 126 As Rutledge and other members of the lowcountry elite would see, backcountrymen could no longer be worn down by the delaying tactics of more experienced Charleston politicians. 127

<sup>124</sup> See John Rutledge's comments in Columbian Herald, March 28, 1785.

ti<sup>11</sup>Henry Laurens to John Laurens, January 22, 1775, in Philip M. Hamer et al., eds., <u>The Papers of Henry Laurens</u>, 14 vols. to date (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968-), 10:39-40.

<sup>136</sup> For a discussion of the impact of war on different sections of South Carolina, see Nadelhaft, "The 'Havoc of War' and its Aftermath in Revolutionary South Carolina."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup>During the Regulator crisis in the late 1760s, backcountry representatives complained that lowcountry opponents had defeated a country court bill by simply waiting for upcountrymen to tire and go home. They made the same charge in the early days of the Revolution in the Provincial Congress, when they argued that "rich rice planters and

Despite lowcountry eloquence, John Lewis Gervais introduced the plan to move the capital that finally gained approval from both houses of the legislature. <sup>123</sup> Gervais, a former Charleston merchant now serving as a state senator from Ninety-Six district, owned several thousand acres in the backcountry. He and Henry Laurens had invested jointly in backcountry lands in the 1760s, and eventually Gervais had moved there to secure their interests. <sup>123</sup> He had been an outspoken critic of British merchants in post-war Charleston, and he now presented a plan to move the capital to Friday's Ferry on the Congaree River rather than Camden. <sup>123</sup> The plan called for commissioners to divide 640 acres near Friday's Ferry into half-acre lots. When money came due from the sale of 25 percent of these lots, construction on the new state house could begin. If no one bought the land, the capital would remain in Charleston. <sup>123</sup> Gervais' plan gained enough support from outlying lowcountry parishes to pass both houses, and the legislature passed "an act."

the towns-people had schemed to weary them out in order to thin the House and transact business their own way." See Richard J. Hooker, ed., The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charlest Woodmason, Angilean literant (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 237; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, Anamary 22, 1775, Pages of Henry Laurens, 10:39-40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Klein, <u>Unification of a Slave State</u>, 144-145. See also notes of Frances Leigh Williams concerning the removal of the capital, Frances Leigh Williams Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate, 1:559-562; <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House</u>, 3:256-258.

 $<sup>^{130}</sup> Friday's$  Ferry, present day Columbia, was about ½ mile below the junction of the Saluda and Broad rivers.

<sup>131</sup> Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 137.

to appoint Commissioners to purchase lands for the purpose of building a town and for removing the seat of government thereto." 122 The new capital would be named Columbia.

Nevertheless, no one in Charleston had the slightest interest in moving the capital. Passing legislation to purchase land and construct buildings was one thing; physically removing the offlices and records of government and holding a meeting of the legislature in Columbia was something else. Preoccupied with the issues of debtor legislation and strengthening the federal government, the House pushed aside concerns over the capital. Charleston's legislators hoped to delay the move as long as possible. But when the State House in Charleston burned in February 1788, backcountrymen saw the opening for which they had waited. Rather than spending public money reconstructing an assembly hall in Charleston, the vasked, why not build in Columbia<sup>201</sup>

Backcountrymen seized the opportunity to make the move a reality the following year. Alexander Gillon, an old Charleston foe now representing Saxe Gotha in the backcountry, promised to help "fix Columbia at once" in the upcoming legislative session. <sup>14</sup> On January 16, 1789, during the first session of the Eighth General Assembly, Arthur Simkins of Ninety-Six District gave the House a one-week notice that he would bring in a bill to move the capital to Columbia. <sup>25</sup> Charleston representatives used their

<sup>132</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786, 533, 596.

<sup>133</sup> State Gazette of South Carolina, February 3, 1788.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup>Alexander Gillon to "Dear Colonel," November 17, 1788, Robert W. Gibbes Autograph Book of the Revolution, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup>Michael E. Stevens, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1789-1790</u>.
The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press,

experience and eloquence to stall and delay as best they could. Edward Rutledge sneered that he had been to Columbia and found nothing there. Rawlins Lowndes needed more assurance that Columbia could receive the assemblymen without making them "sleep in the open air." He wondered sareastically if the legislature would be making laws or "hewing down logs, and building houses?" But removal supporters countered that such objections no longer sufficed. The majority of the population lived away from the coast, Pietree Butler argued, and the capital, "like the sun, ought to be in the center, visible to all," not tucked away "in a corner." Butler, though a wealthy lowcountry planter (and attached through marriage to the powerful Middleton family), certainly had sufficient reasons for withing to see the capital moved. By 1788 he owned over 8,200 acres in the backcountry. <sup>107</sup> Jacob Brown, from the District between the Broad and Catawha rivers, urged his colleagues to act quickly before port authorities from the new federal government arrived and persuaded the legislature to keep the capital in Charleston. <sup>118</sup>

Astonishingly, when the House finally cut off debate and voted, the proposal passed 89-71, and Columbia became South Carolina's new capital. 199 Voting analysis

<sup>1984), 38.</sup> Simkins had moved from Virginia to South Carolina in 1772 in what became Edgefield County in the backcountry. He served in the war as a captain and subsequently represented Ninety-Six District in the legislature. In 1787 he owned over 3,000 acres in Ninety-Six, and at his death in 1826 owned fifty-nine slaves. <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate</u>, 2:1457-1458.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup>City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, January 26, 1789.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. See also Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House, 3:108-113.

<sup>138</sup> City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, January 26, 1789.

Journals of the House of Representatives, 1789-1790, 60-62.

reveals that the measure won approval because 25 percent of the votes in favor of removal came from outlying lowcountry parishes. Removal advocates gained enough allies from the parishes surrounding Georgetown to the north of Charleston and Beaufort to the south to permanently move the capital to Columbia. The upcountry voted unanimously, 67-0, while the lowcountry divided, 22 favoring removal, 71 opposed. Of the 26 members from Charleston present, 25 voted no. Only merchant John Blake deserted his colleagues to vote yes. <sup>160</sup> In fact, Blake was the only representative from any of the seven parishes in or immediately surrounding Charleston to vote for removal. Charleston and its immediate neighbors (St. Andrew, St. George Dorchester, St. James Goose Creek, St. Thomas and St. Dennis, Christ Church, and St. John Colleton) voted monolithically, 59-1, to oppose the move to Columbia. Fully 79 percent of the total "no" votes came from the Charleston area. Lowcountry parishes more removed from Charleston's influence voted 21-12 in favor of removal. <sup>161</sup> The legislature fixed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>I have been unable to find any satisfactory reason why Blake voted to move the capital from Charleston. A successful merchant in Charleston since the early 1770s when he had entered into partnership with his father Edward, Blake inherited his father's estate on Wappoo Crede in St. Andrews Parish just outside Charleston. He served as a lieutenant during the war and was exided to St. Augustine during the British occupation. Blake voted in favor of the federal Constitution at the state ratifying convention in 1788 and attended the state constitutional convention in 1780 and state of the state constitution and the state ratifying convention in 1780 and the state constitution and the schemal ready and the state constitution of the state ratifying convention in 1780 and the convent any land or had any financial interests in the backcountry. Not does his vote to move the capital seem to have affected his political career: he was reelected to represent Charleston in the General Assembly every year until 1799, and then represented Charleston as a Federalist in the state senate from 1802-1809. Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House, 3:72-73.

<sup>141</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1789-1790, 60-62.

December 1, 1789, as the date for transferring public records from Charleston to Columbia. [42]

Anti-Charleston forces were not satisfied with this victory, however. The issue remained an open wound, and it came up again the following year in the state constitutional convention in Columbia. Removal advocates wanted the fixture of Columbia as the permanent capital written into the new constitution. 10 Lowcountry members balked, and the demand touched off "violence and confusion." 14 Nevertheless, when debate ended and all votes had been east, the backcountry prevailed by a slim margin of four votes, 109-105. 16 Once again, members from outlying lowcountry parishes broke ranks with their colleagues to support the backcountry. Furious Charleston representatives knew this defeat was final, and they did not accept it graciously. Christopher Gadsden blamed defeat on "the impatience and desertion" of lowcountry members who returned home before the final vote. 16 Charleston attorney and

<sup>142</sup> City Gazette and Public Advertiser, January 30, 1789.

<sup>16&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>The proposal was made by James Green Hunt of the Lower District between the Broad and Saluda rivers. James Alvin Campbell, "The South Carolina Constitution of 1790," M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1967, 59.

<sup>146</sup> City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, May 26, 1790. For a good narrative of the debates in the convention, see Campbell, "Constitution of 1790," 59-67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup>Campbell, "Constitution of 1790," 67; Zahniser, <u>Charles Cotesworth Pinckney</u>. 109; Francis M. Hutson, ed., <u>Journals of the Constitutional Convention of South Carolina</u>, May 10, 1790 to <u>June 3</u>, 1790 (Columbia SC: South Carolina Historical Commission. 1946).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup>"Letter from Christopher Gadsden to Mr. Thomas Morris, May 30, 1790," South Carolina Historical Magazine 2 (January 1901): 44-45.

Federalist congressman William Loughton Smith blasted the "folly and absurdity of the measure," and heatedly denounced "the almost incredible treachery of some of our lowcountry people," 447

The controversy over the location of South Carolina's capital in the aftermath of the Revolution was more than simply an argument over convenience. Clearly larger and more important issues of power-both cultural and political—were at stake. Certainly contemporaries thought so. Ninety-Six lawyer Peter Carnes argued in the state constitutional convention in 1790 that South Carolinians could choose between meeting "amongst the opulent at Charleston, which to the upper country members was a different climate, or amongst those who were styled of Plebian race." Conversely, William Loughton Smith feared that a backcountry capital would "shed a malignant influence on all the proceedings of the legislature." The removal of the state capital represented a clear sign that political power was shifting away from city merchants and planters to orising backcountry farmers and their allies in the outlying lowcountry parishes. By 1789 the Charleston elite could no longer count on unilateral lowcountry support in legislative contests with the backcountry. Charlestonians tried to reassure themselves that very little real power had been lost. One Charleston support in insisted that the city would remain "a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup>William Loughton Smith to Edward Rutledge, July 4, 1790, in George C. Rogers Jr., ed., "The Letters of William Loughton Smith to Edward Rutledge, June 8, 1789 to April 28, 1794," South Carolina Historical Magazine 90 (April 1968): 120-122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup>City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, May 26, 1790.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>169</sup>William Loughton Smith to Edward Rutledge, July 4, 1790, "Letters of William Loughton Smith," 120-122.

place of great importance, being the principal scaport<sup>10159</sup>. Another argued defiantly that Charleston had lost not the "seat of government" but only the "seat of the legislature." <sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, the move represented a major blow to Charleston's political dominance.

The revision of the state constitution in 1790 represents the final direct challenge to loweountry hegemony in the post-war years. As stated earlier, by 1790 the backcountry contained 80 percent of the white population. Almost every backcountry petition to the legislature praying for an inland capital also requested constitutional revision. <sup>153</sup> The lowcountry-dominated state senate delayed revisions through most of the decade but finally agreed on March 4, 1789, that a convention should meet the following year to revise the constitution. A motion to hold the convention in Columbia passed the House 78-32. The backcountry favored Columbia 59-2, while the lowcountry opposed it 50-19. Once again, the outlying lowcountry parishes provided the support necessary for backcountry triumph. <sup>153</sup>

The convention met in Columbia from May 10 to June 3, 1790. The new constitution contained several democratic features, including full religious freedom and the abolishment of the aristocratic privy council. The Constitution of 1778 had required

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup>John Farquharson to Gabriel Manigault, June 24, 1789, Manigault Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>151</sup> State Gazette of South Carolina, June 3, 1790.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>157</sup>In addition to those cited above, see for instance Petition # 134, from inhaltants of York County, September 27, 1785, and Petition #224, February 20, 1786, from Chester County. <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1785-1786, 316, 440-441.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>153</sup>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1789-1790, 220-222.

all officeholders to believe in God and a future state of rewards and punishments and had established Protestantism as the official religion. The new constitution required a quorum of 50 percent of the members in each house to transact business, a number considerably higher than the 34 percent necessary in the lower house and 45 percent required in the state senate by the Constitution of 1778. This measure, of course, prevented Charleston (or any other area for that matter) from passing narrowly beneficial legislation in a poorly attended house. 154 In terms of apportionment, the lowcountry still dominated in true numbers. However, given that the outlying lowcountry parishes deserted the Charleston area in the 1789 and 1790 votes over removal of the capital, lowcountry dominance cannot be assumed from raw numbers. The Constitution of 1790 lowered the number of delegates in the lower house from 202 to 124. The lowcountry share dropped from 62 to 56 percent (70), while the backcountry's increased from 38 to 44 percent (54). The new Constitution expanded the upper house, from 29 to 37 members, with the backcountry electing 46 percent, up from 38 percent in 1778. In spite of these gains, the lowcountry retained control of the legislature, despite having only 20 percent of the white population Nevertheless, as both the vote to remove the capital and to hold the convention in Columbia had made clear, the lowcountry could no longer be considered as a monolithic voting bloc.

By further dividing lowcountry apportionment between the Charleston District and the outlying Georgetown and Beaufort districts, the Constitution of 1790 emerges as a triumph for the anti-lowcountry and anti-Charleston elements in post-war South.

<sup>154</sup>Thorpe, ed., <u>Federal and State Constitutions</u>, 6:3255-3265.

Carolina. 19 Further dividing the lowcountry in this way reveals that Georgetown and Beaufort now controlled 17.7 percent (22 members) of the lower house (see Table 4-1), and 18.9 percent (7 members) of the senate. These two outlying lowcountry areas could combine with the backcountry in 1790 to control 61.2 percent of the members of the lower house, and 64.8 percent of the senate. 19 Throughout the 1790s this alliance made its weight felt in the legislature, democratizing militia laws, opposing the incorporation of Charleston banks, and replacing legislative appointment of sheriffs and court officials with popular elections. 197 And, as will be seen, Columbia and the backcountry ultimately belped elect a Republican rather than a Federalist president (and a Charleston Federalist vice-president) in the election of 1800. The Constitution of 1790, so often hailed by historians as a conservative document that ensured lowcountry dominance throughout the antebellum period, in reality swuns the balance of political power saws from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Nadelhaft first drev these distinctions between lowcountry districts in Disorders of War, 20-212. The Districts are broken down into the following parishes: Georgetown: Williamsburg District, Liberty District, Kingston District, All Saints Parish, Prince George Winyah Parish. Beaufort: St. Peter Parish, St. Luke Parish, St. Prince George Winyah Parish. Beaufort: St. Peter Parish, St. Loth. Colleton Parish, St. Andrew Parish, St. George Dorebester Parish, St. Paul Parish, St. John Colleton Parish, St. Andrew Parish, St. George Dorebester Parish, St. Bannet Goose Creek, St. Philip & St. Mikhael Parishes (Livy of Charleston, Ds. John Berkeley Parish, St. Stephen Parish, St. James Santee Parish, St. Thomas & St. Dennis Parish, and Christ Church Parish.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>To be sure, if lowcountry apportionment in the Constitution of 1778 is divided into three political divisions, it appears that the backcountry and the remote lowcountry parishes could combine to dominate apportionment in the earlier Constitution. Nor until after the war, however, dif Georgeotrow and Beausfort often untile with the backcountry over such controversial and emotional issues as repeal of amercement and confiscation laws, traves on slaves, removal of the capital, and revising the constitution.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>157</sup>Nadelhaft, <u>Disorders of War</u>, 212.

Charleston's orbit. Charleston alone could no longer dominate state politics. Rachel N. Klein has noted that the Constitution of 1790 represented the conclusion of a decade in which the coastal clite had been forced to make limited concessions to opposition groups, and in effect the elite contained that opposition without relinquishing their authority, continuing to "wield power beyond their numbers under the second South Carolina constitution." \*\*\*\* Nevertheless, even limited concessions can be revolutionary when political and economic power are at stake, and if Charleston's elite found the Constitution of 1790 to their liking it was only because it did not force them to give up more. Charleston aristocrats knew they had irrevocably lost something important: the Revolution had forced them, by 1790, to share power in a way that would have been untintable in 1765.

In many ways, the Revolution shattered the political world that most of the Charleston elite had known in 1765. During the immediate post-war years they found themselves under attack within the city from artisans, mechanics, and small merchants. These political "notisiders" had found their voice during the American Revolution and now subjected the aristocracy to a withering and harsh egalitarian political rhotoric that questioned policy toward British merchants, protested the excessive power of Charleston's city government, and openly challenged old assumptions about the aristocratic right to rule. After weathering a potentially devastating financial crisis (primarily of their own making) in the mid-1780s, Charleston leaders faced renewed challenges from backcountrymen who demanded equal representation in government and

<sup>158</sup>Klein, <u>Unification of a Slave State</u>, 147.

a new capital more fully suited to their geographical and cultural liking. During these twin battles, stunned and shocked city aristocrats like William Loughton Smith and Christopher Gadsden found themselves deserted by former lowcountry supporters who now allied themselves with rising backcountry planters like John Hunter, Wade Hampton, Robert Anderson, and Robert Goodloe Harper. This change reflected the growing strength of the democratic backcountry, emboldened by the experience of war and Revolution, and the slow shift of political power away from aristocratic coastal planters and merchants. When Governor Charles Pinckney took his seat in the new statehouse in Columbia in 1790, he hoped that the controversy over the capital had been "settled and the differences it occasioned buried forever in oblivion \*150. In time sectional wounds would heal, in part because of the economic links being forged even as that sectional controversy took place. For if Charleston's political dominance had begun to flicker into twilight by 1790, its economic future shone brightly indeed, given new life by the enterprising spirit unleashed by the American Revolution. And few late-eighteenthcentury Americans relished the opportunity to make money more than South Carolinians. For Charleston, the radicalism of the American Revolution closed one door and opened another.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>159</sup>Charles Pinckney to Andrew Pickens, July 4, 1790, Andrew Pickens Papers, Charleston Library Society.

TABLE 4-1

Comparative Legislative Apportionment for Charleston, Beaufort & Georgetown, and the Backcountry in the Constitutions of 1778 and 1790

	House		Senate	
	1778	1790	1778	1790
Charleston	47.5 %	38.7%	44.8%	35.1%
Beaufort & Georgetown	14.8%	17.7%	17.2%	18.9%
Backcountry	37.6%	43.5%	37.9%	45.9%

Source: Walter B. Edgar et al., eds., <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives</u>, S vols. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1974–1992), 3:798-799.

## CHAPTER FIVE THE DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL ECONOMY, 1783-1800

"Your state will yet be a haven for foreign ships, and trade and commerce will come unto you in great abundance."
"Arthropian," 1783

"The genius of our people is entirely turned from war to commerce. Schemes of business and partnerships for extending commerce are daily forming." David Ramsay, 1783

The American Revolution created unprecedented economic opportunities for Charleston and South Carolina. Carolinians of all ranks embraced the chance to reshape their economic landscape and expand trade and commerce as aggressively as their Northern brethren. During the 1780s and 1790s Carolinians eagerly built roads, bridges, ferries, incorporated towns, established markets, and invested in banks and canals, all with the expressed intention of economically capitalizing on independence by improving transportation links between the upcountry and the seacoast metropolis. As the democratic politics unleashed by the Revolution polarized rising backcountry planters from established lowcountry leaders, economic improvements slowly healed sectional wounds. They provided backcountry farmers with improved access to markets, 'thus

<sup>&</sup>quot;Market" and "market economy" throughout this chapter refers to Joyce
Appleby's definition as the "invisible flow of goods and payments girdling the globe and
crisscrossing the countryside." Joyce Appleby, Capitalism and A New Social Order: The
Republican Vision of the 1790s (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 30.

enabling the economic windfall of the Revolution to be widely shared, while simultaneously ensuring Charleston's continued economic dominance desnite the decline of its political fortunes. All of these measures were overtly designed to facilitate access to the economic marketplace. The upcountry residents who petitioned endlessly for improvements and lowcountry leaders who responded favorably to these requests and invested in inland navigation companies were very explicit about their intentions. Each cleared river, new road, bridge, or ferry made it possible or more convenient for increasing numbers of backcountry farmers both to sell their produce and purchase manufactured goods in Charleston. In effect, the American Revolution combined democratic politics with expanding economic liberalism to produce a democratic political economy, in which widespread access to the market ensured that the economic benefits of independence would be shared by all rather than a select few, muting the divisive effects of democratic politics.2 Thus, upcountry farmers did not seek to isolate themselves culturally or economically from the market economy. Instead they sought political and economic inclusiveness. They eagerly embraced new economic opportunities and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>I have borrowed this term from Michael Merrill, because I agree with his contention that we must examine the development of apallalism within the context of existing political and social relations, and because I believe it describes the economic and political inclusiveness sought by backcountry famers and Charleston artisans. I disagree with Merrill's argument that farmers, artisans, and laborers in the early republic favored a political economy that was different from the kind preferred by merchants, financiers, or master manufacturers. He suggests using "democratic economy," "yeonane economy," or bacreht felts preferred alternative. I do not agree with his contention that the Revolution was a "profoundly anticapitalist enterprise," and that small farmers, artisans, and laborers were anticipatilates. Michael Merrill, "Pattle ("Capitalism' in its Place: A Review of Recent Literature," William and Mary Quarterly 52 (April 1995): 315-326.

clamored for transportation improvements that would strengthen their economic ties with Charleston. The lowcountry elite responded favorably to these requests both because they coincided with their own wishes and because they hoped that these improvements would preserve Charleston's economic dominance in the state and region. Thus, if the Southern economy was not yet explicitly capitalistic in the early republic, neither was it anticapitalistic or anti-modern. South Carolinians did not seek to isolate themselves from an economically progressive, increasingly capitalistic, modern world in the decades after the Revolution. Instead, as Charlestonian David Ramsav had predicted in 1778, the American Revolution made it possible for them to "ride triumphant on the ocean, and to carry American thunder around the world. 3 As Gordon S. Wood has demonstrated for the North, the explosion of Southern economic activity was in its own way as radical and as ideologically powerful as democratic notions of political equality.4 Ultimately, the American Revolution in South Carolina brought both political and economic radicalism. Democratic equality and economic liberalism emerged triumphant, even in the most conservative, aristocratic section of the American Republic.

This interpretation challenges several existing paradigms. Most especially, it challenges the neo-Marxist contention that the majority of Americans in the late

David Ramsay, An Oration on the Advantages of American Independence: Spoken Before a Publick Assembly of the Inhabitants of Charleston in South Carolina, on the Second Anniversary of That Glorjous Ena (Charlestown SC: John Wells Jr., 1778), 8.

Gordon S. Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), esp. 229-369. See also Wood, "The Enemy is Us: Democratic Capitalism in the Early Republic," <u>Journal of the Early Republic</u> 16 (Summer 1996): 295-308.

eighteenth and early nineteenth century, particularly small farmers and urban artisans, resisted the "transition to capitalism" that began in the northeast after 1750.5

Furthermore, most historians who have addressed this subject have either ignored the

See particularly Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," William and Mary Quarterly 46 (1989): 120-144, especially 105: Kulikoff The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism (Charlottesville VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992), particularly chapter four, "Was the American Revolution a Bourgeois Revolution?" 99-126; James A. Henretta, The Origins of American Capitalism: Collected Essays (Boston MA: Northeastern University Press, 1991); Merrill, "Putting 'Capitalism' in its Place"; Thomas S. Wermuth, "Were Early Americans Capitalists? An Overview of the Development of Capitalist Values and Beliefs in Early America," Mid-America: An Historical Review 74 (January 1992): 85-97. For the transition to capitalism in the northeastern countryside, and the resistance to it, see Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude. eds., The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America (Chanel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985): Christopher Clark, The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860 (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Winifred Barr Rothenberg, From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Daniel Vickers, "The Transition to Capitalism in the American Northeast," History Teacher 27 (May 1994): 267-269; Christopher Clark, "Economics and Culture: Opening Up the Rural History of the Early American Northeast," American Quarterly 43 (June 1991): 279-301; Michael Merrill, "The Anticapitalist Origins of the United States," Review: A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center 13 (Fall 1990): 465-497; Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," William and Mary Quarterly 47 (1990): 3-29; Michael A. Bernstein and Sean Wilentz, "Marketing, Commerce, and Capitalism in Rural Massachusetts," Journal of Economic History 44 (March 1984): 171-173: Richard Bushman, "Family Security in the Transition from Farm to City, 1750-1850," Journal of Family History 6 (1981): 238-256; Robert E. Mutch, "Colonial America and the Debate about the Transition to Capitalism." Theory and Society 9 (November 1980): 847-863: James Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalité in Preindustrial America," William and Mary Ouarterly 35 (1978): 3-32; Michael Merrill, "'Cash is Good to Eat': Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," Radical History Review 4 (Winter 1977): 42-71; Robert E. Mutch, "Yeoman and Merchant in Pre-Industrial America: Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts as a Case Study," Societas 7 (Autumn 1977): 279-302.

South altogether or argued that the South was non- or anti-capitalist. Directly related to this point, this chapter also argues that Southern planters were not anti-modern in economic outlook, anxious about capitalistic economic development. or culturally

For instance, Allen Kullkoff writes that "the South was the main exception to the growth of equitalism. The few southern equitalism and workers remained embedded in an unticapitalist slave society." The Agratian Origins of American Capitalism, 112, 124. Similarly, in the study of the South Cerulina backcountry, Rachel Klein regions that "up to the Civil War, the household was the primary context of production in the backcountry and throughout the southern states. Looked at from this perspective, the planter class was precapitalist—or nonespitalist." Klein, Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1509-1808 (Chapel Hill NC University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 3. See also, of course, the work of Eugene D. Genovese below.

7For a good recent summary of this school of thought, see Douglas R. Egerton, "Markets Without A Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism." Journal of the Early Republic 16 (Summer 1996): 207-221. Egerton argues that "if the Atlantic market shaped the plantation economy to its own ends, it simultaneously spawned a landed elite with economic interests and moral values antagonistic to the spirit of modern capitalism." Egerton, "Markets Without a Market Revolution," 220. Perhaps, but not necessarily to the spirit of late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century capitalism. The most influential articulation of the view that Southern planters were anticapitalists is Eugene D. Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy & Society of the Slave South (New York: Random House, 1965), 3-39: The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation (1969; rpt. Middletown CT: Weslevan University Press, 1988), Part One, "The American Slave Systems in World Perspective." 3-113: and Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Genovese argues that Southern planters and their economic system were tied to the world system of markets but were not capitalists. "The planters were not mere capitalists; they were precapitalist, quasi-aristocratic landowners who had to adjust their economy and ways of thinking to a capitalist world market. Their society. in its spirit and fundamental direction, represented the antithesis of capitalism." Political Economy of Slavery, 23.

See most recently Joyce E. Chaplin, An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815 (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). opposed to economic improvements. \*Gordon S. Wood's contention that "no event in the eighteenth century accelerated capitalistic development of America more" than the American Revolution is as equally true for the South as the North. \*And finally, it overturns the notion that the American Revolution in South Carolina was a conservative

movement, limited primarily to minor political reforms.11

For the growth of a culture in the South that flowmed upon capitalistic economic pruntis, see W. J. Cash. The Mind of the South (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), 3-55; William R. Tsylor, Cazaldier and Yankeer. The Old South and American National Annateric New York: George Braziller, 1961); Genoves, Political Economy of Slawery. 12-39; Genovee, The World the Slawcholders Made. 165-194; David Bertelson, The Lazz Sauth (New York: 1967); Bertrum Wyan-Hown, Southern Honore, Efficies and Behavior in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 175-198. For a discussion of what he calls the "leavue-learness myth," see C. Vann Woodwalp published my Sundscheduler (1967). Southern Efficie in a Puritan World." American Counterpolist: Slawery and Racisin in the Southern Efficie in a Puritan World." American Counterpolist: Slawery and Racisin in the Sundscheduler (1967). Southern Southern Bertrum (1967). Southern Sou

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," in Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II, <u>Beyond Confederation</u>: <u>Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity</u> (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 78.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ktein, Linffeation of a Slave State: George Winston Lane Jr., "The Middletons of Eigheenth-Centry South Carolina: A Colonial Dynasty, 1678-1787," Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1990; John C. Meleney, The Public Life of Aedanus Barkes, Revolutionar Regulbica in Desta Revolutionary South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Peess, 1989); Robert M. Weir, Zolonial South Carolina: A History (Millwood NY; KTO Press, 1983) 332-3333; E. Stauly Godbold Jr. and Robert H. Woody, Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution (Knooville TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Jerome J. Nadelhaft, The Discontence of War. The Revolution in South Carolina (Ornon ME: University of Maine at Ornon Press, 1981); George C. Rogers Jr., Charleston in the Age of the Pinickney (1969; rpt., Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1980); Frances Leigh Williams, A Founding Family: The Pinickneys of South Carolina Press, 1980); Frances Leigh Williams, A Founding Family: The Brent Clow, "Edward Ruttedge of South Carolina, 1749-1800: Umproclaimed Statesman," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1976; Robert M. Weir, "The Harmony We

The American Revolution brought political radicalism to South Carolina through more egalltarian politics and economic radicalism in the spread of economic liberalism. Lowcountry aristocrats fiercely resisted the former, while South Carolinians of all ranks embraced the latter. Of course, the ideology of economic liberalism did not simply appear as some magical deus ex machina in 1783; in some sense it had been present since the arrival of the first colonists. <sup>12</sup> The Revolution did not necessarily change economic thought; instead, it provided opportunities for South Carolinians (indeed all white Americans) to participate in a market economy by releasing Americans from the constraints of the British mercantile system. The Revolution allowed Americans to create strong national and state governments to regulate commerce, finance internal improvements, encourage banking, and protect inventions, all of which allowed capital (and a capitalist society) to grow. As Allan Kulikoff has noted, all of these functions were inconocivable under the British mercantilist system. Unlike Kulikoff, however, this

Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," William and Mary Quaterly 28 (October 1969), 473-510, Marvin R Zahniser, Charles Cotsworth Plinckney: Founding Father (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), Jerone J. Nadelhaff: The Revolutionary En in South Carolina, 1775-1788, "Bn.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1965; Raymond G. Starr, "The Conservative Revolutions: South Carolina Public Affairs, 1775-1790," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1964; George C. Rogers Jr., Evolution of A. Federalist: William University of Texas, 1964; George C. Rogers Jr., Evolution of A. Federalist: William Poss, 1962), Frederick P. Bowes, The Culture of Early Chauleston (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1962).

<sup>&</sup>quot;See especially Joyce Appleby, Capitalism and a New Social Order, 1-50; Appleby, Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination (Carbridge Mr. Appleby, Liberalism and Republicanism and Republicanism and Resurgeois Relaxation University Press, 1997); Isaac Krannick, Republicanism and Bourgeois Relacibilism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America (Though NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Robert Shalbope, Die Rostos fol Democracy: American Thought and Cultury, 1756-1800 (Boston Mr. Twayne, 1990).

chapter argues that South Carolinians warmly embraced these innovations. <sup>13</sup> South
Carolinians—merchants, artisans, yeoman, planters—created a liberal society and economy
by their actions and deeds. It was not forced upon them by a monied, exploitive elite, nor
was it brought about against their will. <sup>16</sup> Nor did upcountry farmers seek to isolate
themselves from the inroads of the market economy. The economic debate in post-war
South Carolina did not revolve around competing economic systems (i.e., production for
exchange or production for use) but rather turned on the question of providing access to
markets, ensuring that upcountry farmers could benefit equally in the new economic
opportunities created by the American Revolution. There is little evidence of the sort of

<sup>&</sup>quot;Allan Kulikoff has made the most convincing argument for the role of the American Revolution in accelerating the development of a capitalist society, but because he is a neo-Marxist, or moral economy, historian, he does his best to explain that Americans did not necessarily like the transition, or participate in willingly. See "Was the American Revolution a Dougoeisk Revolution" in Agrarian Originas of American Revolution and Independence "opened up new visuas that utilizately accelerated and rechapsed developments already under way." Gilje, "The Rise of Capitalism in the Early Republic 16 (Summal of the Early Regulbig 16 (Summer 1996, 1)17. Richard D. Brown argues that the American Revolution stimulated the forces of "modernization": "a new political system and a new ideology were encouraging processes that had been retarded if not actually reversed by the Imperial system." Brown, Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1690-1885 (New 1997, Hill and Wang, 1976), 114.

<sup>&</sup>quot;For an excellent argument against the notion that "the entire explosion of economic and popular energy in early inneteenth-century. America that we ladder "libertalism" was carried out in opposition to the will of the bulk of the population," see Gerdon S. Wood, "Faguilaty and Social Conflict in the American Revolution," 705, in "Forum: How Revolutionary Was the Revolution? A Discussion of Gordon S. Wood's The Reliabilation of Hot American Revolution, "Millman and Mary Coastrict" of (Orober the Spring of Conflict in the American Revolution. "Millman and Mary Coastrict") (Orober the spring of economic liberalism in Zuckerman," A Direct Zuckerman's interpretation of the spring of economic liberalism in Zuckerman, "A Direct Zuckerman's interpretation of the spring of economic liberalism in Zuckerman," A Direct Zuckerman's Interpretation of the spring of economic liberalism in Zuckerman, "A Direct Zuckerman's Interpretation of the spring of economic liberalism in Zuckerman, "A Direct Zuckerman's Interpretation of the Spring o

populistic, anti-market activity that Steven Hahn asserts characterized most of the Southern upcountry in the nineteenth-century. If In both late eighteenth-century Charleston and South Carolina artisans, craftsmen, and yeoman farmers actively sought to improve their chances of competing in the marketplace in order to reap the economic benefits of the new American republic. If They did not seek to seelude and isolate themselves in some sort of communal, anti-capitalist culture that protected them from the workings of the market. If The market did not "intrude" upon these people. They openly welcomed it. In fact, many backcountry farmers worked very hard to remove the physical

<sup>&</sup>quot;Insternation Line The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Institutional Conference of the Georgia (Decempter), 1880-1889 (New York: Oxford ultivnerity Press, 1983). Joyce E. Chapilin argues that backcountry whites 'vida not flee the consequences of commercialization and form themselves into a studiedly notalgic yeomany. Instead, they actively sought to omet the ceternal market and complained whenever they were denied access to the commercial world." Chapilin, "Creating a Cotton South in Georgia and South Carolina, 1760-1815," Journal of Southern History 57 (May 1991): 1835.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Jon C. Teaford has noted that during the half century after the Revolution, city governments became less concerned with regulating the urban economy-settling prices and restricting artisanal profits—and more concerned with health and transportation problems. "Butches, bakers, and market vendors were costing off the restraints of the past... The ideological context of American life was changing, and the ideal of past and the properties of the past of th

<sup>&</sup>quot;Rachel N. Klein finds backcountry planters exhibiting aggressive, acquisitive behavior but recolls at the action that bees farmers were "replitalists," or that they were helping to create a "capitalist South," because the primary context of production continued to be the household. Instead the arguest that by their commitment to slavery, planters prevented the development of a labor market and "insulated the majority of southern bouseholds from the sort of market penetration that transformed northern society and culture during the half-century before the Civil War." Klein, Linification of a Slave Slate. 3-4.

impediments (if not the cultural and political ones) that obstructed their links to Charleston. They believed that the American Revolution, their participation in and sacrifices during the war, indeed the notion of "republicanism" itself, entitled them not only to political equality, but economic gain as well.<sup>11</sup>

None of this is meant to argue, however, for consensus history—that there were no fundamental divisions among Americans, or that America has always been capitalist.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, the Revolution in South Carolina cannot be understood without considering the political and cultural divisions between upcountry and lowcountry South Carolinians. Furthermore, if Immanuel Wallerstein is correct that capitalism is a system of production organized primarily for exchange rather than use, then surely a transformation took place

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>For an excellent recent discussion of the amorphous concept of "republicanism," see Thomas L. Pangle, The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), especially 28-39.

<sup>19</sup> Carl N. Degler wrote that "capitalism arrived in the first ships," Degler, Out of Our Past: The Forces that Shaped Modern America 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 2-9. See also Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955): Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (New York: Vintage Books, 1948), and America at 1750: A Social Portrait (New York: Vintage Books, 1971); Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom (Boston: 1949). Hofstadter argued that "what we must envisage in order to comprehend eighteenth-century America is a middle-class world," Hofstadter, America at 1750, 131. Alfred F. Young argues that consensus historians, or "counterprogressives" as he calls them, held the unproven assumption that "the common people shared the ideas of the elites." Alfred F. Young, ed., Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism (DeKalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 7. See also Young, "American Historians Confront 'The Transforming Hand of Revolution," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., The Transforming Hand of Revolution: Reconsidering the American Revolution as a Social Movement (Charlottesville VA: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 387-402.

at some unspecified time in America's past.<sup>20</sup> As Paul A. Gilje described it, "somewhere, somehow, something dramatic happened in the minds of many Americans; they began to seek gain through capitalist enterprise.<sup>201</sup> Historians of the early American North have convincingly argued that the transition to capitalism began there around the middle of the eighteenth century and that it developed slowly and unevenly over the next one hundred years.<sup>22</sup>

But were Americans in the early Republic "capitalists" living in a "capitalist" economy? Most scholars who have investigated the "transition to capitalistm" agree that the American Revolution accelerated the process, but, not surprisingly, disagree over the use of the term "capitalistm" to describe the emerging economic system. These scholars can be roughly divided into two schools. The first, "moral economy" (or neo-Marxist) historians, influenced by the work of Karl Marx and English social historian E.P.
Thompson, are generally hostile toward capitalism and thus argue that post-Revolutionary America was not capitalists and that the majority of Americans favored some non-

<sup>&</sup>quot;Wallerstein defines a capitalist world economy as "production for sale in a market in which the object is to realize the maximum profit." Wallerstein, The Capitalist World Economy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 15. See also his Historied Capitalism (London: Verso, 1983). Wallerstein believes that capitalism as a world system evolved in Europe in the sixteenth century. See The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century. 2 vols. (New York - Academic Press, 1974).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Gilje, "The Rise of Capitalism in the Early Republic," 178.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>See especially Rothenberg, <u>From Market-Places to Market Economy</u>, and Clark, Roots of Rural Capitalism.

capitalist alternative. <sup>33</sup> They argue that the majority of farmers, artisans, and other laborers produced primarily for use, not for exchange, that the household rather than the market was the primary focus of economic concern, and that small farmers and artisans did not farm and trade in order to get more money, land, or status. They participated in the market only to maintain their way of life, not to make a profit. Moral economy historians are concerned with the class struggle they believe is inherent in the development of a capitalist economy. <sup>34</sup> or using such economic indices as aggressive, acquisitive

<sup>23</sup> These historians are known by various names: neo-Marxist, neo-Progressive, Revisionists, moral economy, social, or New Left historians. All have been more or less influenced by E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), and "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," Past and Present 50 (1971): 76-136; George Rudé, The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964); Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen From the Bottom Up," in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 3-45. For good recent examples of the work of moral economy historians, see Hahn and Prude, eds., The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformations; Bruce Laurie, Artisans into Workers; Labor in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989). Many of these scholars cut their ideological teeth in the 1960s during a decade of political and social ferment and have subsequently sought the same sort of anti-establishment, anti-capitalist, class conflict in the American past that they witnessed on college campuses in the 1960s. As Allan Kulikoff has written, "Everywhere I looked in contemporary America, from campuses to urban shettos, ordinary people were rising up, demanding equality, racial justice, an end to poverty, war and oppression. How, I wondered, had similar people lived in the past?" Kulikoff, Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism, xi. For two good examples of scholarship that finds this sort of social unrest in Revolutionary America, see the collected essays in two volumes edited by Alfred F. Young, The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism (Dekalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), and Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism (Dekalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993).

 $<sup>^{26}\</sup>mbox{Michael Merrill}$  argues that to equate capitalism with a market economy means that "there is no way to oppose capitalism without opposing markets, that the only

economic behavior, flexible currency, banks, corporations, transportation systems, or consumerism as evidence of a capitalist economy. To do so, as Eugene D. Genovese, Michael Merrill, and Douglas Egerton have written, defines practically everyone in eighteenth-century America as capitalist, and as Gordon S. Wood has noted, "is disastrous for any moral condemnation of capitalism." Moral economy historians argue instead that capitalism should be defined as "a series of social relations characterized by free-wage labor and the separation of the labor force from the means of production, so that labor is rendered incapable of subsisting without recourse to the market." In short, only something akin to industrial capitalism with factory wage labor can actually be defined as capitalism. Under this definition, America did not become capitalist until the late nineteenth century and the South even later.

acceptable alternative to capitalism is a society without markets." Merrill, "Putting Capitalism in its Place," 325.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Sec Genovese, Political Economy of Slavery, 19, Mertill, "Patting Capitalism in Slavery, 19 Mertill, "Patting Capitalism in Slavery, 19 Mertill, "Patting Capitalism of the Patting Capitalism of the American Revolution for "celebrating capitalism as part of the radical achievement." Young Beared the American Revolution, 9. Wood rightly notes that many moral economy historians have tied themselves into knots trying of the eighteenth-entury American economic behavior into orthodox Marain theory. Wood, "The Enemy is Us," 297. Writing specifically about Marxist historians, Darrett B. Rumana's argues that "inhetenth-entury polemics carrier badlely and abistorically into the work of late twentieth-century social history makes for patent absundities." Rutman with Annia H. Rutman, "Historians" Imperatives, or An empiricals in Marxist Den," in Small Worlds. Large Questions: Explorations in Early American Social History, 1600.
[38] Officanticutal VA. University Press of Virginia, 1949. 7. Bertram Wysta-Brown argues that "tecapturing the mood of the past is hard enough without indulging in the should-have-benes." Wysta-Brown agrues that: "Wysta-Brown agues that: "Wysta-Brown

Conversely, "market historians" argue that Americans have always been more or less capitalist and that they generally favored vigorous capitalist expansion. <sup>24</sup> Most Americans, they believe, voluntarily and eagerly participated in the market economy to obtain a higher standard of living and economic advancement. They focus on economic behavior and equate commercial expansion, market participation, banks, flexible currency, and investment in transportation systems and agricultural improvements with capitalism. Both schools agree that Americans engaged in exchange in a market economy

<sup>26</sup> Thus, true market historians reject the idea of a "transition to capitalism," or of a "capitalist transformation." See Kulikoff, "Transition to Capitalism," 125-126. Joyce Appleby writes, "the passionate party warfare of the 1790s did not determine whether or not America's economy would be capitalistic. That had already been decided long ago with the integration of the colonies into the great Atlantic trade." Appleby, Capitalism and A New Social Order, 56. Nevertheless, Wood argues that the Revolution "unleashed acquisitive and commercial forces that no one had quite realized existed." Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness," 77. The most prominent work of market economy historians for the Revolutionary and early republic periods are Gordon S. Wood. The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969); Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution; Appleby, Capitalism and A New Social Order: Appleby, Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination; Rothenberg, From Market-Places to a Market Economy; James T. Lemon, The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania (New York; W.W. Norton, 1972); John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, The Economy of British America, 1607-1789 (Chapel Hill NC; University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Michael Merrill faults Appleby and Wood for equating capitalism with a "generic commercial economy," and that therefore they see "the prosperity that followed the Revolution as a sign of an emergent, radically new, capitalist order rather than as the expansion of a dynamic. profoundly anticapitalist, and democratic old order." He says that American independence meant for most Americans the freedom "to do whatever they could do, consistent with their God-given talents and ambitions, in whatever line of work they chose to pursue." Merrill calls this line of democratic thought "anticapitalism." I would argue that it would be hard to find a better definition of economic liberalism. Merrill. "Putting Capitalism in its Place," 323-324.

but disagree over the motives for and extent of this exchange. "Gordon S. Wood has observed that both schools recognize the presence of this behavior but cannot agree on what to call it." Moral economy historians, for instance, would argue that most Americans participated in commodity markets but only in a limited way in order to make money to pay taxes or purchase imported manufactured goods that could not be produced locally. Market historians, however, contend that Americans increasingly practiced "possessive individualism." They worked primarily to earn profits, to improve their standard of living, acquire more land or slaves, or purchase consumer goods for use and luxury. Joyee Appleby has argued that this economic individualism, far from being fraught with class conflict, "undergirded Jefferson's optimism about America's future as a progressive, prospersous, democratic nation." In the process of practicing increased possessive individualism, Americans replaced the notion of a classical republic with a democratic marketplace, led not by a disinterested elite but by "competing individuals with interests to promote."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>For instance both murket historian Gordon S. Wood and neo-Marsist Allan kullkoff stress the singular importance of the role played by the American Revolution in the creation of a capitalist America. Wood: 'No event in the eighteenth enemary accelerated the capitalistic development of America more than did the Revolutionary war.' Kullkoff: "The American Revolution may have been the most crucial event in the creation of capitalism." Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness," 78; Kullkoff, Agrarian Ordins' of American Canitalism. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Wood, "The Enemy is Us," 295.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Appleby, "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic," <u>Journal of American History</u> 68 (March 1982): 836.

<sup>30</sup> Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness," 103.

The problem is that there is no clear, universally acceptable definition of capitalism. And as Allan Kulikoff has noted, "one's definition of capitalism structures one's vision of American society," 

Moral economy historians stress class struggle and conflict between competing economic systems. Market historians stress aggressive, acquisitive economic behavior, individualism, and voluntary participation in markets for economic advancement and an improved standard of living. As stated earlier, this chapter argues that late eighteenth-century South Carolinians did not disagree over "systems of economic relations," but instead concerned themselves with "distribution of profits" and accessibility to markets. 

Thus, this dissertation equates capitalism and economic liberalism with voluntary participation in a free market economy. 

The term "liberalism" is defined as an economic system stressing individualism, competition, and a free market economy.

If eighteenth-century South Carolinians were not anti-capitalist, neither were they culturally opposed to economic development. The Charleston and South Carolina elite were not, as many historians have argued, anti-development, anti-modern, or anxious about economic development in the sense that they shunned technological improvements,

<sup>31</sup>Kulikoff, "Transition to Capitalism," 125.

<sup>32</sup>These phrases are borrowed from Allan Kulikoff, "Transition to Capitalism," 125-126.

<sup>3&</sup>quot;My definition of capitalism accepts Immanuel Walterstein's contention that certainger after than class struggle is central to any understanding of capitalism. Walterstein, <u>Historical Capitalism</u>, Walterstein is a neo-Marxist but does not share his Cooleagues's belief in the centrality of class conflict and fee above. See Gonewe, <u>World the Slaveholders Made</u>. And ed., xix: "We [Marxists] agree on the centrality of class relations in general relations in general.

agricultural innovations, or financial institutions that would enhance and develop their city and region. Their enthusiasm for and investment in canals new towns new technologies, banks, and new commercial opportunities, reflects a commitment to growth and development previously overlooked or denied by historians of Southern economic. political, or social life. The interpretation of neo-Marxists has again been most prominent. Eugene D. Genovese finds Southern planters participating in a capitalistic. market-oriented world but argues that they were not themselves capitalists 34. The South he writes, was "premodern:" planters were "precapitalist, quasi-aristocratic." who lived in a society that "in its spirit and fundamental direction represented the antithesis of capitalism."35 Allan Kulikoff argues that "the South was the main exception to the growth of capitalism. The few southern capitalists and workers remained embedded in an anticapitalist slave society. Slaveholders created an anticapitalist niche for themselves in the capitalist world."36 Writing specifically about South Carolina, Rachel N. Klein states that in the years following the Revolution, backcountry planters acted "aggressively acquisitive" but were not capitalists. They produced for the household, not the market. she argues, and thus participated in the market only to the extent necessary to sustain existing relationships, not to make money. When "looked at from this perspective, the

<sup>3&#</sup>x27;See Genovese, <u>The World the Slaveholders Made</u>, 2nd ed., vii: "slavery in the Old South raised to power a social class of a new type and laid the foundations for a new social order that was in but not of the trans-Atlantic capitalist world."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Genovese, <u>Political Economy of Slavery</u>, 3, 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Kulikoff, <u>Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism</u>, 112, 124. See also Kulikoff, <u>Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake</u>, <u>1680-1800</u> (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 3-15, 261-313.

planter class was precapitalist—or noncapitalist.<sup>207</sup> Similarly, Douglas Egerton finds a landed elite in the South producing for the market but yet exhibiting "economic interests and moral values antagonistic to the spirit of modern capitalism." Egerton reminds us that "export-minded slaweholders exhibited little interest in the entrepreneurial activity necessary for even small-scale manufacturing.<sup>208</sup> Apparently no matter how much interest planters had in investing in banks, transportation improvements, or agricultural innovations—all for the express purpose of expanding capital and facilitating access to markets—they were not capitalists because they did not employ wage labor or invest in manufacturing.

Other historians have found that Southern culture and values retarded the growth of progressive economic development. W.J. Cash, William R. Taylor, William W. Freehling, David Bertelson, Edmund S. Morgan, Rhys Isaac, and Bertram Wyatt-Brown have all argued that a Southern commitment to slave-based, stuple-crop agriculture created a culture of honor and leisure that frowned upon and was contrary to notions of coonomic improvement.<sup>29</sup> But a culture based upon honor, slavery, and paternalism was

<sup>37</sup>Klein, Unification of a Slave State, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Egerton, "Markets Without a Market Revolution," 220, 215.

<sup>3&</sup>quot;Sec Cash, The Mind of the South, 3-55; Taylor, Cavalier and Yankee, 95-141; Genovese, The Political Economy of Shavera, 3-39; Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made, 165-194; William W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1316-1336 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), Bertelson, The Lazz South Edmund 3. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordenol of Colonial Virginia (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 44-71; Rhys Issae, The Linzafomation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), esp. 88-138, 320-322; Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, esp. 176-179, but also 327-329. Wyatt-Brown agues that most planters "willingly ided themselves to the market economy, but

not necessarily antithetical to economic liberalism. This interpretation of an antiprogressive, anti-modern, "lazy south" first took root in contemporary travel accounts and
has been more or less perpetuated by historians ever since." In 1785, Timothy Ford, a
New Jersey native living in Charleston, scorned "that dronish ease and torpid inactivity
which are so justly attributed to the people of the Southern states. . . life is whiled away
in idleness, or consumed in dissipation." Others noted South Carolina's obsessive
hedonism. German traveler Johann David Schoepf observed that "the people of
Charleston live rapidly, not willingly letting go untasted any of the pleasures of this life,"
and he claimed that Carolinians far exceeded Northerners in their love of luxuries. <sup>4</sup>
Compare these observations with Freehling's contention that "disdainful patricians never
escaped the suspicion that enthusiastic plantation management smacked of Vankee
practicality" and that Southerners "bragged about being English gentlemen rather than

preferred defensive over innovative tactics." (p. 178) "For all the pride in self-retinate and liberty, few. Americans were as devoided as Southerness were to the economic shackles of tradition. That sort of restrictiveness about livelihood was also bound to affect the general Willingeness of individuals to strike out on different moral, cultural, and social paths." (p. 177) He argues that many planters were culturally opposed to following any pursuit other than planting, and even them many resisted an economically rational approach: "Some, at least, were deliberately, even truculently opposed to the ways of the "manufacturing and large commercial centers" and their allegedy stulifying and impersonal values." [6, 178] For a dissession of how alwayer came to be seen as anti-progressive and anti-modern, see David Brion Davis, Slavers and Human Progress (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), 15-415.

<sup>46</sup>See Chaplin, An Anxious Pursuit, 71-91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Joseph W. Barnwell, ed., "Diary of Timothy Ford," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 13 (July 1912): 143.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup>Johann David Schoepf, <u>Travels in the Confederation [1784-1785]</u> 2 vols., trans. by Alfred J. Morrison (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1968) 2:216, 168.

American go-getters." Planter's sons, he wrote, "drank and idled away time in Charleston," and preferred "dissolute idleness to disgusting careerism." <sup>43</sup> Traveler's accounts have been widely used by historians because of their often picturesque description of early American life, but as Joyce E. Chaplin has recently warmed, these accounts mix fact and fiction and often exaggerated the unfamiliar to increase entertainment value and provide more compelling narratives. In the process they have helped created persistent cultural stereotypes. <sup>44</sup>

Whatever the South became after 1820, the notion that Southerners shunned aggressive economic behavior because of economic or cultural reasons must be overturned for the years immediately following the American Revolution. South Carolinians of all ranks actively pursued measures in the 1780s and 1790s designed to economically improve their state and secure Charleston's dominance in the region. In this sense the South developed economically much like the North in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. Democratic politics unleashed by the Revolution also accelerated economic liberalism in South Carolina, as backcountry farmers and planters

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Freehling, Prelude to Civil War, 34-35, and Freehling, <u>The Road to Disunion</u>. Volume 1, <u>Secessionists at Bay</u>, <u>1776-1854</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 29.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ironically, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century traveler's accounts that depict steeropyical channeterizations of Southern slaves as "given" and "servile" have been rejected as racist; their depiction of white southerners is almost always accepted at face value. See for example, Rhys issae, "Iranse/mation of Virginia, so-p, chapter four, "Church and Home: Celebration's of Life's Meanings," 3-83, for extensive quotations from the journal of Philip Vickers Fithian; Grady McWhitey, <u>Cracker Culture: Celtic Was in the Old South (Tuscalosoa Kat. L'uluversity of Ababama Press, 1988), and David Hackett Fischer, <u>Albiton's Seedt Four British Folkways in America</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).</u>

linked increased demands for more equal political representation to demands for more equal access to markets. Lowcountry planters and merchants thought that aggressive economic behavior—investment in internal improvements, agricultural innovations, and new financial institutions—would blunt the excesses of increased democracy and ensure their city's growth and continued regional economic dominance in the new American republic. If future generations of Carolinians failed to sustain this vision of Charleston as the economic terminus of a vast Southern hinterland, we are compelled nevertheless to recognize the existence of this progressive, modern, liberal vision before 1820 and its origins in the political and economic radicalism of the American Revolution. To overlook or dismiss it as unimportant or fleeting is to miss the significance of the American Revolution in the South.

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South Carolinians praised the economic benefits of independence from Great Britain almost from the moment of separation. They recognized, of course, that severing the bonds of empire with Great Britain would bring not only political freedom but also unprecedented economic opportunity as well. Judge William Henry Drayton told a Charleston Grand Jury in 1776 that "heretofore you were bound--by the American Revolution you are now free." God Himself, "with a stretched out arm . . has delivered us out of the House of Bondage and has led us on to empire." <sup>40</sup> Two years later, on July 4, 1778, David Ramssy expounded on the theme of release from bondage to emphasize

<sup>\*</sup>William Henry Drayton, A Charge on the Rise of the American Empire, Delivered by the Hon. William Henry Drayton, Esq., Chief Justice of South Carolina, To the Grand Jury for the District of Charlestown (Charlestown: David Bruce, 1776), 2, 6.

and extol the economic benefits of the new American republic. Like Drayton, Ramsay perceived the "foundations of a new empire, which promises to enlarge itself to vast dimensions, and to give happiness to a great continent." He argued that union with Great Britain shackled and stifled America's commerce, sacrificing growth and diversity to "the regulations of an avaricious step-dame." Independence, however, would unleash the talents and energies of the American people. South Carolina's "forests will be transformed into vessels of commerce, enriching this independent continent with the produce of every clime and every soil." Ships from all nations would fill Charleston harbor, bringing more money and higher prices for Carolina products than had been nossible under a British monopoly. Increased commerce would in turn increase capital to be invested in transportation, educational, agricultural and industrial improvements at home. In short, "our change of government smiles upon our commerce."46 Another Carolinian echoed Ramsay's themes five years later when the British evacuated Charleston. Using almost Biblical language, "Aethiopian" prophesied that "your state

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ramssy, Oration on the Advantages of American Independence, 1-6, 8, 11, 16, 18, 20. Ramsay would continue to receive these same themes for the remainder of his life, through he was disappointed in the ability of Charleston merchants to trade with nations other than Britain. See his An Address to the Freeman of South Carolina on the Subject of the Federal Constitution (1788, 19, AD ardinato prepared For Delivery Brote the Inhabitants of Charleston. Assembled on the 27th of May. 1788, 10 Celebrate the Inhabitants of Charleston. Assembled on the 27th of May. 1788, 10 Celebrate the Adoption of the New Constitution by South Carolina (Bowm and Co., 1788), 5-6, Ramssy, The History of South Carolina From Its First Settlement in 1670, to the Year 1808, 2 vols. (Charleston SC: Charle (Longworth, 1809), 2-228-239.

will yet be a haven for foreign ships, and trade and commerce will come unto you in great

With independence won in 1783, Charlestonians lost no time in setting out to fulfill those prophesies. They reestablished old trading patterns, forged new trading alliances and networks, and sought new markets. After eight years of war and occupation, Charleston harbor sprang to life as Carolinians scrambled to rebuild their lives and make new fortunes. The value of imports more than tripled from 1783 to 1784, slave imports increased over 350 percent, while the price of rice reached a new high in 1784.<sup>48</sup> The extent of post-war activity astonished and delighted Henry Laurens, just returned from four years in Europe. "The merchant, the farmer, the mechanic are all busy in their respective vocations," he noted, "each one anxious in the pursuit of his own, at the same time without seeming to know or mean it, contributing to the public weal. In a word, everybody appears to be busy in some way or other." Planter Pierce Buller

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>Aethiopian, <u>A Sermon On the Evacuation of Charleston</u> (Philadelphia: For the Author, 1783), 15-16.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Merchants imported £300,000 in 1783, and £1,000,000 in 1784. Slave imports increased from 110 in 1783 to 500 in 1784. The price of rice averaged £45 det billings per hundred weight in 1784; the pre-war high was 11.7 in 1772. From 1761 to 1770 the price ranged from ±8 to 53 shillings. During the twelve months ending in November 1784, 50961 to not elected Charleston barbor; that figure increased to \$6,162 were the next twelve months. Between 1768 and 1772 the yearly clearance averaged only 31,000 tons. Nadlehath, <u>Disorted or War.</u> 154, 148, 150, 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>Henry Laurens to Edward Bridgen, September 23, 1784, William Gilmore Simms Collection of Henry Laurens Papers, Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon Massachusetts (hereafter referred to as Kendall Collection), microffin, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. See also Laurens to Martha Laurens, August 19, 1784 and to James Bourdieu, September 22, 1784.

thought the war gave "a new spring for industry. Our wharfs present a scene of bustle and activity that I have not seen for many years." Merchant Alexander Gillon expressed optimism about the prospects for "a wide, general and extensive trade, hitherto unknown to many, and new channels of commerce hitherto unexplored and unthought of." Ramsay reported favorably to Benjamin Rush that "the genius of our people is entirely turned from war to commerce. Schemes of business and partnerships for extending commerce are daily forming." Robert Pringle, trained as a physician at the University of Edinburgh, enthusiastically set aside his medical practice in 1783 and formed a mercantile partnership with his brother-in-law William Freeman Jr. of Bristol, England. Pringle parlayed "some fortunate speculations in the planting business" to finance his partnership, reversing the usual course of investing mercantile profits into

 $<sup>^{59} \</sup>rm Pierce$  Butler to Thomas Fitzsimons, May 18, 1783, quoted in Rogers,  $\underline{\rm Evolution}$  of a Federalist, 97.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>Alexander Gillon to Hugh and Alexander Wallace and William Gibbes, July 4, 1783, Alexander Gillon Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, September 9, 1783, in Robert L. Brunhouse, ed., "David Ramsay, 1749-1815: Selections From His Writings," <u>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</u> 55, Part 4 (1965): 76.

<sup>&</sup>quot;See Article of Agreement of Copartnesship between Robert Pringle and William Freeman, June, 1783, and Robert Pringle to Rev. Edward Parkins, December 27, 1783. Robert Pringle to "Dear Sir," undated, Robert Pringle to Edmand Granger, to undated, Robert Pringle, Nobert Pringle, February 20, 1784, Brobert Pringle to Edmand Granger, to Robert Pringle, Nowember 13, 1783, February 20, 1784, in 18 ringle Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston. Pringle's father was longtime Charleston merchant Robert Pringle's. See Walter B. Begar and N. Louise Bailey et al., Silbographical Director-of the South Carolina House of Representatives, 5 vols. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1974-1992), 2:542-544. William Freeman Ir, married Pringle's sister Elizabeth Mayrant Pringle. The other partner in the firm was William Freeman Ir, st uncle.

land. The manufactured goods Pringle imported found a ready market among Charleston planters and lawyers, and Pringle's connections to the local elite paid immediate dividends. By early 1784 he could boast that the bulk of his customers were "gentlemen of fortune and means (who) attach themselves wholly to our store for everything they want." The partnership, however, evidently failed to live up to these auspicious beginnings and Pringle retired from business in 1787. Nevertheless, he remains a good example of Charleston's new enterprising, risk-taking merchants who capitalized on the opportunities presented by the Revolution."

Another, more successful, "scheme" was the partnership between native Carolina merchants Josiah Smith Jr. and his brother-in-law Edward Darrell. The two men had been pre-war partners, and both had been exiled to St. Augustine during the British occupation. They returned to Charleston and formed a new mercantile house with Smith's cousin George Smith and former Beaufort merchant Daniel DeSaussure. <sup>50</sup> The

<sup>\*</sup>Robert Pringle to William Freeman Jr., no date [but sometime in early 1784], Pringle Family Paper. Fingle owned 253 acres and \$8 alwes in \$K\$ Bartabolmew Parish in 1783. His brother John Julius Pringle was a successful Charleston lawyer, so Robert was well connected to two important Charleston groups. See N. Louise Bailey, ed., Blegraphical Directory of the South Carolina Sensiet, 1773–1583, a visa. (Columbia Sci. University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 2:1316-1317, and Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House, 3:866-851.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>After leaving the mercantile business Pringle entered politics, serving in the South Carolina Sensate from 1789-1794 in the Eighth through Tenth General Assemblies. By 1790 he owned eleven slaves in Charleston and sixty-four in St. Bartholomew Parish, Biographical Director of the South Carolina Sensate 2:1361-3171, U.S. Brueau of the Census, Heads of Emillies at the First Census of the United States 7 Jaken In the Year 1720, South Carolina (Washington Oct. Government Phrings Office, 1903), 53, 40.

<sup>56</sup> See Rogers, Evolution of a Federalist, 97-99.

firm of Smiths. DeSaussure and Darrell became the most successful native-owned mercantile house in post-war Charleston, and three of the four partners played active and prominent roles in the city's economic development in the 1780s and 1790s. Darrell would become a founding member of the revived, anti-British Charleston Chamber of Commerce, serving as both vice president and president. He voted for ratification of the United States Constitution at the South Carolina convention of 1788, owned nine slaves in 1790, served as a director of the Inland Navigation Company in 1793, and was involved in the Charleston branch of the Bank of the United States. Josiah Smith Jr. also voted in favor of the Constitution and invested \$55,000 in the Charleston branch of the Bank of the United States in 1792. He also served as the bank's cashier until its dissolution in 1810. He owned seventeen slaves in 1800. Daniel DeSaussure also belonged to the Charleston Chamber of Commerce, serving as vice president in 1793-1794, voted for ratification of the U.S. Constitution, and served as a director and president of the Charleston branch of the Bank of the United States in the 1790s. He owned thirty-nine slaves in 1798. In addition, Josiah Smith Jr, Darrell, and DeSaussure all represented Charleston in the General Assembly during the 1780s.57 These men

<sup>&</sup>quot;George C. Rogers Jr. has identified Smiths, DeSaussure and Darrell as one of the four distinct Federalist factions present in Charleston during the 1790s. He identifies them as "leaders of the new Chamber of Commerce and directors of the branch bank." Rogers Jr., Charleston in the Age of the Pinchezers, 161-171; Biographical Directory of the South Carolina States, 175-189. 1369-170, 665-667; Biographical Directory of the South Carolina States, 175-1898, 134-386; Learne A. Calhoun, Martha A. Zierden and Elizabeth A. Paysinger, "The Geographic Spread of Charleston's Mercantile Community, 1732-1767; Sundt Carolina Historical Magazine So (July 1985): 182-220; Heads of Families at the First Census, 38; Charleston Chamber of Commerce Records, South Carolina Historical Carolina His

moved quickly to capitalize on the new economic opportunities of independence, seeking out new lines of commerce, supporting a stronger central government, and investing in new financial institutions and transportation improvements. These Charleston merchants resemble their Philadelphia counterparts identified by Thomas M. Doerfilnger: aggressive and acquisitive merchants who took risks, reinvested profits, and ultimately made a "critical contribution to the process of economic development." <sup>58</sup>

Native merchants like Smiths, DeSaussure and Darrell had to compete, however, with a large cohort of well-placed British merchants. As discussed in chapter four, South Carolina Governor John Mathews allowed British merchants in Charleston to remain behind the evacuating army in order to collect debts and sell off supplus merchandise. Many of these merchants eventually applied for and were granted citizenship by the planter-dominated Assembly. Among the most prominent British merchants were Henry Shoolbred, Benjamin Moodie, William Tunno, Jonathan and William Simpson, Thomas Stewart, James Miller and David O'Harn.<sup>29</sup> To complicate matters for native merchants, on July 2, 1783, the British closed their West Indian islands to American shipping. Henceforth, only British ships could carry Carolina exports directly to the British

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Thomas M. Doerflinger, A. Yigorous Spirit of Entertrise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia (New York: W. W. Yorton, 1986), 163-164. Gregory Allen Greb Found similar behavior among ante-bellum Charleston merchants. See Greb, "Charleston, South Carolina, Merchants, 1815-1866: Urban Leadership in the Antebellum South," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1978.

<sup>59</sup> See Rogers, Evolution of a Federalist, 100-103.

Caribbean market.\*\* Portugal likewise prohibited the importation of Carolina rice.

Though independence technically brought free trade with the world, native merchants had lost two very lucrative markets for Carolina produce. Rice and indigo planters were now doubly reliant upon British merchants both for credit and access to markets. Thus the British monopolized post-war trade in Charleston with easy access to carriers, merchandise, slaves, and above all, credit, that most native merchants lacked.\* Mathew's agreement blatantly favored the planters—who needed to quickly restock their plantations—at the expense of native artisans and merchants who continued to compete directly with their British counterparts, as they had before the war. By 1783, however, Charleston's artisans and mechanics, politicized by the Revolutionary movement, refused to accept deferentially elite planter wishes. As detailed in the previous chapter, they adopted democratic language and street protests to question the notion of "disinterested" elite leadership. Charleston aristocrats reacted in part by incorporating the city and establishing a strong city government capable of quelling arisan protests. The city's

Ocharles R. Ritcheson, Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783-1795 (Dallas TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969); Nadelhaft, Disorders of War, 151-152.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Merchant Joseph Clay of Savannah noted that "the planter will as far as in his power sacrifice everything to attain superso,s" and noted that the slave trade is to tende of fish country as the soul to the body, and without it no house can attain a proper sability." Clay made complaints about British merchants in Savannah similar to objections in Charleston. See Joseph Clay to Joachim Noel Farmming, April 23, 1783, to objections in Charleston. See Joseph Clay to Joachim Noel Farmming, April 23, 1783, to James Jackson, February 16, 1784, to George Meade, April 17, 1784, "Letters of Joseph Clay, Merchant of Savannah, 1776-1793," Collections of the Georgia Historical Society 8 (1933): 191, 194-195, 210.

native merchants equally detested the agreement with British merchants but chose a different approach to voice their dissent.

A group of native merchants established the Charleston Chamber of Commerce in 1784 to promote new, non-British, avenues of trade, and to protest the favoritism shown to British merchants in Charleston. Thirteen native merchants met at the City Taven on February 4, 1784. Their numbers soon grew to nearly seventy and included some of the most prominent native merchants in Charleston. Founding members included Edward Durrell, of Smiths, DeSaussure, and Durrell, Alexander Gillon, who would challenge Richard Hutson for the office of Charleston intendant (mayor) in the fall of 1784, and John Lewis Gervais, a Charleston merchant with substantial landholdings in the blackcountry. The exclusion of all foreign merchants made clear the Chamber's anti-British stance, and they simultaneously opened a correspondence with Thomas Jefferson, American representative in Paris, about extending South Carolina's limited commercial intercourse with France. <sup>6</sup>

Though originally concerned with policy toward British merchants in Charleston, native merchants, working through the Chamber of Commerce, soon focused their attention on influencing policy designed to reopen British West Indian ports to American

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup>Journal of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce, Charleston Chamber of Commerce Records, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Ibid., February 6, June 2, July 28, 1784. Jefferson wrote to Goose Creek planter Ralph Lzard asking for information on Carolina produce. Izard forwarded the letter on to the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber replied to Jefferson's queries on October 15, 1784.

shipping as well as finding viable alternatives to British monopolization. Officers64 corresponded with merchants in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, and all agreed that American trade would suffer until Congress could uniformly coordinate trade policy and negotiate commercial treaties binding on all states.65 On April 30, 1784, Congress requested the right to pass a general navigation act, but the states hesitated in granting such broad powers. In January 1785 Congress tried again, appointing James Madison of Virginia to head a committee to lobby the states for greater power to regulate commerce. Once again jealousy and suspicion prevented any general agreement. Some states passed tariffs designed to discriminate against British shipping while simultaneously encouraging domestic manufactures.66 Charleston's Chamber of Commerce reacted to such measures by calling for a general meeting of all citizens at the Exchange on August 11, 1785. Native merchants realized that as long as Britain had to negotiate separately with thirteen different governments with regard to trade and navigation, American merchants would continue to labor under enormous disadvantages. They argued that though each state had different commercial interests, prejudicial British policy injured every state in some way. The Chamber of Commerce therefore urged the state legislature

<sup>64</sup>The original officers were Alexander Gillon, president, John Lewis Gervais, vice president, William Hort, treasurer, and Samuel Legare, secretary.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup>For Congressional attempts to deal with foreign restrictions on American trade during the 1780s, see Richard B. Morris, <u>The Foreing of the Union, 1781-1789</u> (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 194-219.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Slbid., 130-161, especially 148-152. As Morris points out, such discriminatory legislation did encourage native manufacturing but also prevented a common market within all states, a major objective of the 1787 Constitution.

to grant Congress the power to regulate American commerce. The meeting strangely echoed pre-Revolutionary gatherings of the 1760s and 1770s. Once again, Charleston merchants protested British trade policy, this time railing against Britain's unfettered access to American ports while she closed her empire to American shipping. The British may have lost the war, but due to the lack of coordinated American trade policy, they could win the peace. Not surprisingly, in 1788 the Charleston Chamber of Commerce overwhelmingly favored the ratification of the United States Constitution, which increased the national government's power to regulate trade. No less than five of Charleston's thirty-one representatives in the state ratifying convention were Chamber members, and Edward Darrell, Daniel DeSaussure, William Sommersall, Nathaniel Russell, and John Edwards unanimously favored adoption of the new Constitution.

A stronger central government might be necessary to pry open closed British ports, but the anti-British Chamber of Commerce did not want to rely solely on traditional British markets. After all, the Revolution had thrown open trade with the world, and many Charleston merchants eagerly sought to increase trade with other European nations, particularly France. In 1784 Thomas Jefferson, American representative in Paris, requested information on South Carolina's exports from his friend Ralph Izard. Lard passed the request on to the Chamber of Commerce, which responded to Jefferson with a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Journal of the Chamber of Commerce, August 1, August 11, 1785.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>See Ritcheson, <u>Aftermath of Revolution</u>.

Meksander S. Salley Jr., ed., <u>Journal of the Convention of South Carolina Which Ratified the Constitution of the United States</u>, May 23, 1788 (Atlanta GA: Foote and Davies, 1928), 39-40.

detailed report. 

Jefferson found it difficult, however, to persuade Charleston merchants to break out of their familiar patterns of commerce. Despite widespread anti-British sentiment, the prevalence of British carriers and credit made it convenient and necessary for Charleston merchants to continue consigning crops of rice and indigo to British rather than French agents, as well as ordering British manufactured goods. Chamber of Commerce members and mercantile partners Thomas Morris and William Brailsford, however, responded favorably to Jefferson's entreaties and began doing business with Berard and Company of France.

The partners explained to Jefferson that though they and many other Charleston merchants desired more extensive trade with France, a combination of planter preferences for English goods, extensive British credit, and

<sup>&</sup>quot;Journal of the Chamber of Commerce, July 28, 1784, October 15, 1784.
Hefferson's letter to Lard was dated My 22, 1784. According to the Panes of Thomas Jefferson's original letter to Izard has not been found. The letter, however, is extracted in the Chamber of Commerce journal on July 28, 1784, which revidently the editions of the Jefferson papers did not find. See Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., The Panes of Thomas Jefferson, 26 volts to date (Pincheston NJ: Princeton University Pens, 1950-), 7233. Lead replied, with the Chamber's report, on June 10, 1785; see Panes Loff Liferson 3195-6.

<sup>&</sup>quot;See Ralph Izard to Thomas Jefferson, October 20, 1787. Exard kept passing Jefferson's letter on to "several merchans, and an happy to find a general disposition among them to enter into commercial connections with France. Messieurs Brailsford and Morris will make a consignment of a cargo of rice to Messieurs Berard and Co. This will be a beginning of what I wish to see carried to a considerable extent." Charleston lawyer Edward Rutledge also encouraged Charleston merchants to begin trading with the French: "Thave endeavoured, and not without success, to convince several of our mercantile people, as well as some of our pilatents, how highly beneficial it will be to change the consignment of their rice from Great Britatin to France." See Edward Rutledge to Thomas efferson, October 2, 1767, both Ingages of Thomas Lefferson, 12:249–252, 26:23-64; efferson, 12:449–252, 26:23-64; efferson, 12:449–252, 26:23-64; efferson, 12:449–252, 26:23-64; efferson, 12:449–252, 26:23-64; effects of Charles and Carolina Historical Manazzine 38 (1957): 122. Thomas Merris was Christopher Gadderis sori-lard for the rice of the constraints of the constraints

enormous planter debt all conspired against them. <sup>73</sup> Morris and Brailsford nevertheless persevered in their belief that "France is indisputably a much better market for our rice and tobacco than England," and they could report with satisfaction by the spring of 1789 that they had shipped thirteen cargoes of Carolina rice to French ports. In addition they reported "considerable exports to the German, Holland, and Spanish markets."

Although the French market never displaced the British, French imports of American rice did rise during this period, from 473,000 francs in 1787 to 11,627,149 francs in 1793."

Throughout the economic crisis of the 1780s, the Charleston Chamber of Commerce labored to reestablish Charleston's sommercial prominence. It worked to counteract discriminatory British trude policy toward American navigation in general and the British monopolization of Charleston trude in particular. Charleston's native merchants played an active role in corresponding with Northern merchants oe encourage a more uniform American trade policy in a stronger central government and eagerly sought new avenues of trade for Carolina commodities. Their lobbying efforts in 1791 helped bring a branch of the Bank of the United States to Charleston and members bought shares

<sup>&</sup>quot;South Carolina's debt to British merchants during the 1780s has been estimated at £860,000 in 1784 and £2,000,000 stering by the mid-1780s. Nadelhart, <u>Disorders of War</u>, 152-153. As one local paper put it, "five are undone, we are the most splendidly ruined of any nation in the universe." <u>South Carolina Gazette and Public Advertiser</u>, May 21, 1785.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Morris and Brailsford to Thomas Jefferson, October 31, 1787, March 10, 1789, Morris and Brailsford to Nathaniel Barrett, 1787, "Letters of Morris and Brailsford," 135, 138-139, 143-144.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup>Edmund Buron, "Notes and Documents: Statistics on Franco-American Trade, 1778-1806," <u>Journal of Economic and Business History</u> 4 (May 1932): 571-580.

in the institution and served as officers until its dissolution in 1810. <sup>32</sup> Throughout the 1780s and 1790s members eagerly invested in canal and other transportation improvement companies, supported the new Federal Constitution in 1787, and served in state and local governments. These merchants eagerly embraced new opportunities provided by the American Revolution and displayed a commitment both to local and regional economic growth in the post-war years. Though native merchants in the Chamber of Commerce were less successful than they hoped in opening new non-British trade routes, their efforts demonstrated those characteristics of Northern merchants, "decibility, innovativeness, and speculative drive," supposedly lacking among Southern entrepreneurs. Charleston's Chamber of Commerce exhibited the same "spirit of enterprise—the drive and flexibility, the tolerance for risk, the rowing quest for new markets," that characterized Northern businessmen during the Revolutionary era. <sup>38</sup>

Like Charleston's merchants, city planters also sought to decrease their reliance upon British merchants and markets while capitalizing on new opportunities. While native merchants formed the Charleston Chamber of Commerce to facilitate their goals, lowcountry planters organized the Agricultural Society of South Carolina in 1785.7 The Society advocated crop diversification and experimentation in order to find additional staple crops (much like indigo in the 1740s) that would open up new markets and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup>Journal of the Chamber of Commerce, May 11, 1791, February 8, 1792, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>Doerflinger, <u>A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise</u>, 344, 355.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>South Carolina Gazette and Public Advertiser, August 27, 1785.

increase profits. In addition to diversification, the Society encouraged agricultural improvements and techniques designed to increase output." Society members corresponded with similar Northern and European societies to gain access to and information about new technology and erops grown in similar climates around the world. Thomas Jefferson sent samples of Mediterranean and Asian rice to society members Edward Rutledge and Ralph Izard, who eagerly sought to make Carolina rice more palatable to southern Europeans." Rutledge explained his strategy to Jefferson: "We must change in part the articles that we raise; we must import as little as possible; and we must find out new markets for our produce. As I can afford to make experiments, I am doing it in the articles of hemp and cotton to a retty considerable decree."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Address and Rules of the South Carolina Society For Promoting and Innroving Agriculture and Other Rural Concenne (Charleston SC. Ann Timothy, 1785), charlestoners, Charlestoners, Charlestoners, Murray, This Dur Land: The Slovy of the Agricultural Society of South Carolina (Charleston SC: Charleston Art Association), 1949, 27–28; Chapilla, Anaxons Pursuit, 140-141; Lewis Ceell Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United Struct 1869, 2 vols, (Washington DC: The Campel institute, 1933), 272-837-85; Williams, Founding Family, 208; George C. Rogers Jr., "South Carolina Ratifies the Foderal Constitution," Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 1961, 43.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Befferson sem the Agricultural Society over ninety different pancels of face, and motes or Philippine rice. Society members planted the rice themselves and parceled it out to other lowcountry planters. Apparently none of it grew in South Carolina. Henry C. Dethloff, Alfistory of the American Rice Industry, 163:1–1935 (College Station TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1988), 42. See Ralph Izard to Thomas Jefferson, April 4, 1978, Partlers of Ralph Izard's Double Toulina Historical Magazine 2 (July 1901); 201-204; Edward Rutledge to Thomas Jefferson, October 20, 1878, Ralph Izard to Thomas Jefferson, Coteber 21, 1878, Ralph Izard to Thomas Jefferson, 104:63-465, 11387-859, 122-629-230, 262-643, 333-399, Murray, Talko Lur Land, 49-61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup>Edward Rutledge to Thomas Jefferson, April 1, 1789, <u>Papers of Thomas Jefferson</u>, 15:12-13. In this same letter Rutledge proposed sending Carolina rice to Constantinople and encouraged Jefferson to find out what he could about that market.

Membership included the top echelon of the Charleston and lowcountry planter community. Thomas Heyward, a Charleston lawyer with plantations in St. Helena Parish on the Combahee River, served as Society president. Vice President Thomas Pinckney was also a Charleston lawyer with vast landholdings on the Santee River. Treasurer Peter Smith owned fifty slaves and over 1,200 acres in St. James Goose Creek. Other members included Goose Creek planter Ralph Izard, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, William Drayton, John Mathews, John Rutledge, Thomas Bee, Aaron Loocock, and Isaac Harleston. Nearly all of these members practiced law as well as planting (Loocock was a mechant), with substantial holdings in both land and slaves in Charleston and the surrounding countryside. See the Charleston and the surrounding countryside.

These men thoroughly subscribed to the notions of a planter ethose based on the culture of honor, slavery, and paternalism. None, however, acted as if these values were antithetical to liberal economic expansion and progressive development. Treasurer Peter Smith saw no contradiction in being a founding member of both the Agricultural Society and the St. George's Jockey Club, while also serving as a commissioner for improving the navigation of Goose Creek. An anno Lococok wrote a pamphlet in 1775 advocating madder (which produced a red dye) as a possible staple crop and in the post-war decades

<sup>81</sup> Rules of the South Carolina Society; Murray, This Our Land, 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House, 2:69-72, 205-207, 323-325, 411-413, 438-440, 525-528, 573-581, 3:371-373, 561-565,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup>Bjographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate, 3:1505.

served as a director of the Inland Navigation Company and the Bank of South Carolina.84 In addition to his mercantile business in Charleston, Loocock was a partner of fellow merchants Nathaniel Russell and Andrew Lord in the Rumney Distillery in Charleston. and at his death in 1794 he owned 3,000 acres and over forty slaves at Middleburg plantation on the Wateree River, 900 acres and forty-eight slaves at his Goose Creek plantation just north of Charleston, and a house at 31 Tradd Street in the city. 85 These were not anti-progressive, anti-modern, "lazv" Southern planters. Instead. Charleston's planter-entrepreneurs eagerly experimented with various crops, pioneered tidal rice cultivation, served in the state and city government, and invested in internal improvement companies. Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Agricultural Society sought to improve techniques for rice and cotton cultivation, crop vields, and livestock breeding, while encouraging exotic crop experimentation and technological innovations, such as improved and more efficient water mills for rice and cotton gins for long- and short-staple cotton. Their belief that "agriculture is the parent of commerce" demonstrated a conviction that new technologies and new markets for agriculture would ultimately benefit all of society, not just lowcountry farmers. 36 By promoting agricultural experimentation, diversification, and improvement. Society

<sup>84</sup> Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House, 2:411-413.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>South Carolina (WPA) Will Transcripts, Wills of Charleston County, 25 (1793-1800):161-166, microfilm, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, originals in Charleston County Courthouse, Charleston.

<sup>86</sup> Rules of the South Carolina Society, 4.

members exhibited a desire to exploit new economic opportunities and increase the prosperity of their city, state, and region.

The shift to tidal rice cultivation and the expansion of cotton further reflected planter commitment to economic growth in the postwar decades. Wartime devastation forced large numbers of lowcountry planters to rebuild their estates. Many planters, faced with reconstruction from the ground up, began shifting rice production from inland to tidewater swamps. Tidal rice cultivation allowed planters to utilize the ocean tides in watering and irrigating their crops. As the tide rose, it pushed fresh water in coastal rivers back upriver, raising water levels and allowing planters to irrigate their crops while simultaneously killing grass, weeds, and insects. This more rational<sup>14</sup> and efficient system shortened the growing season, released slaves from the painstaking tasks of weeding and hoeing, and allowed the harvest to begin earlier and improved crop yield per acre. Planters increasingly began shifting production to tidal swamps and by the first decades of the nineteenth century the shift had been nearly completed. <sup>18</sup> Rice exports reflected the shift. From 1782 to 1786 rice exports averaged just over 28 million pounds,

<sup>&</sup>quot;The term "utional" is meant to imply economic rationalism, using modern, efficient methods in order to maximize profits. In her discussion of the conflict and tension between modernity and slavery, Joyce E. Chaplin has ably demonstrated the irony in the fact that this "artional, efficient, progressive" method of cultivating rice enterenched and fastened slavery even deeper upon lowcountry South Carolina. See Chaplin, Anxious Pursuit. 227. This subject will be exclored in more detail below and in the next character.

<sup>&</sup>quot;For the shift to tidal rice cultivation, see Chaplin, <u>Anxious Pursuit</u>, 227-276; Chaplin, "Tidal Rice Cultivation and the Problem of Slavery in South Carolina and Georgia, 1760-1815," <u>William and Mary Quarterly</u>, 49 (January 1992); 29-61; Gray, <u>History of Agriculture</u>, 2:721, 726-730; Dethloff, <u>History of the American Rice Industry</u>, 18-23.

less than half of the exports from 1769 to 1773, which averaged 70.5 million pounds per year. By 1790 exports had returned to 1770 levels, and from 1790 to 1795 rice exports reached all-time highs, averaging over 79 million pounds, with prices reaching 5.9 cents a pound in 1795, also a record. <sup>39</sup>

The shift to tidal rice cultivation involved an enormous investment of planter capital in labor and equipment. Planters needed slaves to reshape the physical landscape and construct the irrigation ditches, dykes, and embankments that would tame the lowcountry tides. More proficient methods of irrigation led to greater crop yields, which in turn led to a greater need for a more efficient method of rice milling. Thus in the late 1780s and early 1790s Charleston planters began investing in improved rice mill technology, particularly Jonathan Lucas' revolutionary water-powered mill. <sup>10</sup> Lucas' invention originally relied on a pond or reserve of water alongside the rivers to power his mill, but this left him vulnerable to drought or flood. By the early 1790s, however, Lucas had adapted his mill to utilize the ocean tides in much the same way the planters used them to Irrigate their crops. Using the tide and a series of hydraulic lifts and conveyor belts, the Lucas tidal mill simultaneously reduced the amount of labor necessary to mill rice while increasing efficiency and output. At Just the point when Charleston banks

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>Dethloff, <u>History of the American Rice Industry</u>, 40-41. Rice exports for any five year period from 1796 to 1860 never again reached the level of 1791-1795. Gray, <u>History of Agriculture</u>, 2-610, 723.

OF Lucas constructed mills for, among others, Frances Motte Middleton, Peter Hory at Winyah Bay near Georgetown, William Alston on the Waccamaw River, William Horry on the Santee River, Andrew Johnston, and Henry Laurens Jr. on his Cooper River plantation. See Dethloff, History of the American Rice Industry, 32-33, 35.

made capital widely available, planters up and down the lowcountry coast invested in Lucas mills over the next two decades, significantly increasing the amount of rice milled in South Carolina. The Lucas mill proved so effective that in the first decade of the nineteenth century the British government invited his son to build rice mills in England. <sup>31</sup>

The shift from inland to tidal rice cultivation paralleled a movement away from indigo toward cotton production. Charleston planters sought new crops and new markets after the closure of the British Wext Indies and the loss of the British bounty on indigo, the other prominent colonial staple. Carolina planters grew cotton as one of several crops they experimented with in the search for new markets and profits. By the early 1790s, however, cotton became the dominant "second" staple, and by 1800 South Carolina cotton production had surpassed rice exports. Cotton had a distinct advantage in that it could be grown on the same land as indigo; as British demand for Carolina indigo fell and demand and prices for cotton rose, coastal planters eagerly shifted to cotton production. In the mid-1790s a French traveler observed that "the islands along the coast of South Carolina, and even some tracts of the coast, were, until these late years, entirely devoted to the culture of indices but cotton is now cultivated in its room. \*\*60 By 1799, as one

<sup>91</sup> For the Lucas mill, see Ibid., 29-35; Murray, This Our Land, 62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>See Edward Rutledge to Thomas Jefferson, April 1, 1789, Papers of Jefferson, 15:12-13; Aedanus Burke, April 16, 1789, 1st Congress, 1st Session, United States Congress, The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States, 1789-1824 42 vols. (Washington DC, 1834-1856), 1:155.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup>Francois Alexandre Frédéric, duc de La Rocehfoucault-Liancourt, <u>Travels Through the United States of North America</u>, the <u>Country of the Iroquois</u>, and <u>Upper Canada</u>, In the <u>Years 1795</u>, 1796, 1797, 2 vols. (London: R. Phillips, 1799), 1:576.

Charlestonian noted, "the culture of cotton is now the great staple. Never was so much of this planted before." Indeed, cotton production in South Carolina rose from 131 pounds in 1788 to 9,840 in 1789 to over 6.4 million in 1800.

Cotton exports rose primarily because of the spread of short-staple cotton production to the backcountry. This expansion forged important and long-lasting economic links between Charleston and the upcountry and ultimately helped ease sectional political tensions. The population of the South Carolina backcountry had grown steadily since the 1770s and by 1790 contained 80 percent of the state's white population. These farmers first grew wheat, then tobacco. When European demand and prices for tobacco and wheat fell in the 1790s, backcountry producers turned to short-staple cotton. The Whitney cotton gin made short-staple cotton production more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>Charles Caleb Cotton to Mr. Cotton, October 24, 1799, in Julien Dwight Morris, ed., "The Letters of Charles Caleb Cotton, 1798-1802," South Carolina Historical Magazine 51 (October 1950): 225.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Report of George Abbott Hall, Collector of Customs for the Peer of Charlesson, on General Exports from Charleston, November 1786 to November 1785, Imanury 18, 1788, Records of the General Assembly, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia (hereafter cited as SCAPAH); Gray, History of Agricultur, 2:673–690, esp. 679-680; Chaplin, Anxious Pursuit, 208-226; Klein, Unification of a Slave State.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Most of this population growth came overland from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina. Sec Capilia, "Creating a Cotton South," 18.5 Sec also Richard Henry Lee to James Maiison, November 20, 26, 1784." "It is natural for men to fly from oppression to ease, and whist our traces are extremely heavy, and North Carolina and Georgia pay little or no tax it is not to be wondered that so many of our people flock to these states and unfortunately they are earrying to Georgia and South Carolina, and from the interior parts to Kentucky, are very alarming." James Curtis Ballagh, The Letters of Richard Henry Lee, 2 volts, New York: The Masmillan Company, 1971, 2, 2300, 305.

profitable, but it is important to note, as Joyce E. Chapfin has recently pointed out, that neither British demand nor the invention of the cotton gin created the cotton South. 

Cotton spread to the South Carolina backcountry because of the conscious decisions of upland farmers who already participated in a market economy. The shift from wheat to tobacco to cotton was a relatively easy one. Tobacco and cotton required similar techniques of production and the same roads, wagors, and boats that transported tobacco could be used to move cotton. 

Cotton did not create a commercialized economy in the backcountry, it already existed.

The expansion of cotton into the backcountry had an enormous impact on the state's economy and Charleston's continued economic prominence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Total Lower South cotton exports in 1794 are estimated at just over 8 million pounds, mostly long-staple sea-island cotton. Just four years later the expansion of short-staple cotton growth in the backcountry had propelled total cotton exports to over 16 million pounds. By 1804 export levels surpassed 64 million pounds. With cotton prices during this period averaging about 35 cents a pound, the cotton crop exported from Charleston, Savannah, and Beaufort in 1804 was valued at over \$22.4 million. By 1800 South Carolina produced 50 person of all cotton exported from the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>Chaplin, <u>Anxious Pursuit</u>, 277-329, esp. 328. For the origins of short-staple cotton in the upcountry, see also Alfred Glaze Smith Ir., <u>Economic Readjustment of an Old Cotton State</u>: South Carolina, 1820-1860 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1958), 1-18.

<sup>98</sup> Chaplin, "Creating a Cotton South," 193.

United States.<sup>50</sup> Small wonder that indigo production had almost ceased to exist by that same date. Carolinians exported over 839,000 pounds of indigo in 1792, but as cotton production rose, indigo exports fell to 96,000 pounds in 1797 and only 3,400 by 1800. <sup>100</sup>

The American Revolution thus allowed Charleston planters to reshape their world, both literally and figuratively. No one would have wished for the ruinous destruction of property and the devastation of war, but in rebuilding their estates planters did not simply return to the status quo. They eagerly seized the opportunity to make rice cultivation more efficient and profitable, and they experimented with new crops in the search for alternative markets and increased profits. Though planters went deeply into debt in the 1780s rebuilding their plantations, their commitment to new methods of cultivation and encouragement of and investment in new technology propelled Charleston once again to economic dominance in the 1790s, at just the moment when Charleston's political fortunes began to decline. Thus while Charleston merchants, through the Chamber of Commerce, worked to open new avenues of trade, the city's planters invested in improved techniques of rice cultivation and shifted from indigo to cotton to reestablish their city's economic prominence. Planter investment of enormous amounts of capital in increased labor, new techniques, and new technology reflects a commitment to liberal economic growth while undermining the notion of a "lazy South" dominated by planters culturally averse to energy or efficiency.

<sup>99</sup>Gray, History of Agriculture, 2:681-683.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 2:610-611.

The irony, of course, was that by committing themselves to new and more efficient techniques of rice production and the expansion of cotton production. Charleston planters ensured that the economic survival of their city and region would be linked even further with the survival of slavery. The spread of cotton into the backcountry had an enormous impact upon slaveholding in that region, particularly during the decade 1800-1810. The slave population in the South Carolina backcountry increased by 194 percent (from 29,094 to 85,636), while the proportion of slaves in the backcountry population increased from 20 percent in 1790 to 23 percent in 1800 to 32 percent in 1810. In 1790 lowcountry planters owned 73 percent of all Carolina slaves; by 1800 that number had fallen to 65 percent, and down to 56 percent by 1810. In the four configuous backcountry counties of Abbeville, Edgefield, Laurens, and Newberry, the percentage of the slave population grew from 18.3 percent in 1790 to 21.4 percent in 1800 to 30.8 percent in 1810. The slave population in these four counties had reached

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>161</sup>See Lacy K. Ford Jr., Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 19; Klein, Unification of a Slave State, 246-257.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Fleads of Families At the First Census of the United States, 8-9; Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States According To "An Act Providing For the Second Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States." Passed February the twenty-eighth. 1800; (Washington DC, 1802), vol. (hereafter cited as Federal Population Census, 1800); Aggregate Amount of Each Description of Persons Within the United States of America, and the Territories Thereof, Agreeably to Actual Enumeration Made According To Law. In the Year 1810 (Washington Dc., 1811), vol. 3 (hereafter cited as Federal Population Census, 1810).

61.1 percent by 1860. <sup>103</sup> As Joyce E. Chaplin has demonstrated, "modernity" and "progress" in the Lower South came with a very heavy price indeed. <sup>164</sup>

Internal improvements, on a state and local level, played a parallel role to shortstuple cotton production in forging economic and political links between upcountry and
lowcountry and further reflect Southern commitment to economic liberalism and an
eagerness to exploit economic opportunity. Beginning immediately after the evacuation
of Charlesson, backcountry settlers continually demanded that the state provide improved
and equal access to markets—roads, bridges, canals, ferries—in order to reap more fully
the economic benefits of the American Revolution. A host of backcountry petitions
during the 1780s and 1790s simultaneously favored strengthening economic links with
Charleston while weakening political ties with the lowcountry metropolis. Backcountry
firmers coupled repeated pleas for removal of the capital and constitutional reform with
more widespread access to Charleston. Lowcountry leaders did not resist backcountry
demands for economic democracy as they had the upland clamor for political
equalitarianism.<sup>105</sup> They enthusiastically sought to improve the physical links between

<sup>103</sup> Tbid.; Gray, History of Agriculture, 2:685.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup>See Chaplin, <u>Anxious Pursuit</u>, 125-126, 328.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>367</sup>This directly contradicts Genovese's notion that "it did not pay the planters to appropriate state funds to build a transportation system into the backcountry, and any measure to increase the economic strength of the backcountry farmers seemed politically dangerous to the aristocracy of the Black Belt." Genovese, <u>Political Economy of Slavery</u>, 25.

the two sections both for economic and political reasons. 106 Governor Benjamin Guerard told the state legislature that the government had a responsibility to "bestow a very particular attention to all our roads, causeways, bridges, ferries, cuts, and inland navigation."107 Charleston planters and merchants realized that transportation improvements would only bring economic benefit to their port city, as upland farmers exchanged backcountry staple commodities for imported luxury goods. Lowcountry politicians also argued that superior transportation links would blunt political tensions between the two sections. 108 Backcountry material conditions would be improved through increased access to markets, while cultural differences would be lessened by improved educational institutions. "All the uneasiness which has subsisted between the lower and back parts has been occasioned by the inequality of their circumstances." lowcountry planter Ralph Izard insisted. "Enable the latter to bring their produce to market upon moderate terms," he argued, "and they will be enriched. A good education to the rising generation will be the consequences, and we shall become an united and happy people."109 As discussed in the last chapter, many lowcountry leaders argued that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>169</sup>Norman Gasque Raiford, "South Carolina and the Issue of Internal Improvement, 1775-1860," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1974, 8-9. Raiford writes that Charleston initially opposed all efforts to promote internal improvements because of economic jealously, but I have found no evidence to support this statement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Governor Benjamin Guerard Message, February 2, 1784, Governor's Messages, 1783-1830, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH. See also Guerard's message of January 24, 1785.

<sup>108</sup> See Klein, Unification of a Slave State, 244-245.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup>Ralph Izard to Edward Rutledge, November 9, 1791, Ralph Izard Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

the state capital should be moved inland only when backcountry lawmakers were no longer "brought up deer-hunters and horse thieves for want of education." <sup>110</sup> David Ramsay invested \$30,000 in the Santee-Cooper Canal and became a canal enthusiast in part because he believed "our young people especially in the interior country for want of schoolmasters & preachers are deficient in that knowledge which republicans ought to possess." <sup>111</sup> Thus, some Charlestonians supported internal improvements not only for economic reasons but also as a means of providing the backcountry with what many deemed as the essential educational and cultural prerequisites for self-government.

South Carolina's enthusiasm for internal improvements paralleled the zeal of other states in the post-war years. <sup>110</sup> Carolina lawmakers had long recognized the importance of improved transportation. Even while distracted by war the South Carolina legislature noted "the inland navigation of this state is of great importance to the trade and riches of the inhabitants," and Charlestonians discussed plans to cut a canal between the Santee and Cooper rivers as early as 1770. <sup>111</sup> The American Revolution, however, acted as a catalys for transportation improvements, and independence presented extraordinary.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup>Aedanus Burke to Arthur Middleton, July 6, 1782, in Joseph W. Barnwell, ed., "Correspondence of Hon. Arthur Middleton," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 26 (October 1925): 204.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup>Ramsay to John Eliot, June 24, 1795, "Ramsay Writings," 141; Shaffer, <u>To Be an American</u>, 173.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup>See John Lauritz Larson, "A Bridge, A Dam, A River: Liberty and Innovation in the Early Republic," <u>Journal of the Early Republic</u> 7 (Winter 1987): 351-354.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup>Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., <u>The Statutes at Large of South Carolina</u>, 10 vols. (Columbia SC: A.S. Johnston, 1838-1841), 7:521; <u>South Carolina Gazette</u>, January 18, 1770, February 15, 1773.

opportunities for all white Americans to physically reshape the landscape. 114 "A desire of encouraging whatever is useful and economical seems now generally to prevail," George Washington told Thomas Jefferson. 115 He and other Virginians were busy clearing and building canals on the Potomac River, while similar efforts were underway in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. 116 "Our next business will be to improve our country, cutting canals and building bridges," Ramsay told his friend Benjamin Rush in 1784. 117 Farmers and merchants in all states inundated their legislatures with petitions requesting that rivers be cleared, bridges built, ferries established and chartered, and canals dug. They clamored repeatedly for any transportation improvements that would increase the convenience and speed of moving goods while lowering costs. In addition to transportation improvements, petitioners also requested new tobacco inspection

warehouses, the establishment of markets and fairs, and incorporation of towns.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup>Larson, "A Bridge, A Dam, A River," 351-354; Kulikoff, <u>Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism</u>, 105-106, 109.

<sup>&</sup>quot;George Washington to Thomas Jeffreson, February 13, 1789. Pagers of Thomas Jeffreson, 14-56-547. For similar sentiments, sea also Washington to Governor William Moultrie, May 25, 1786, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., <u>The Wirlings of George Washington to Thomas Orders of George Washington Erom the Original Mausscrier Sources, 175-1799, 39 to St. (Washington Clo United States Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 28-439-441; Washington to Marquis de Instaletlux, August 8, 1786, George Washington text Charleston Library Society, Charleston; Henry Laurens to James Bourdieu, September 22, 1784, Kendall Collection, microfilins, South Caroliniana Library.</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup>South Carolina Gazette and Public Advertiser. July 15, 1784; Ronald E. Shaw, Canals For A Nation: The Canal Era in the United States, 1790-1860 (Lexington KY: University Press of Kentucy, 1990, 1-29; Curits P. Nettels, The Emergence of a National Economy, 1775-1815 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 251-262.

<sup>117</sup> David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, April 8, 1784, "Ramsay Writings," 77.

Backcountry South Carolinians displayed an enthusiasm for market exchange in the

language they adopted in petitioning their government, contradicting the notion that these

farmers sought to isolate themselves from the market in order to preserve a

communalistic, self-sufficient ethos that rejected the notions of laissez-faire liberalism. 118

<sup>113</sup> Douglas Egerton argues that "the yeoman exhibited neither an interest in nor an understanding of the acquisitive, entrepreneurial instincts of northern farmers," and that these farmers "remained on the periphery of the market economy throughout the antebellum period. . . . the fiercely independent farmers practiced diversified farming for household subsistence and neighborhood exchange." He also insists that the notion of broad support for internal improvements in the South "would come as bewildering news to the handful of frustrated southern Whigs who pushed for roads and canals." Egerton, "Markets Without a Market Revolution," 217-220. Southerners opposed only those internal improvements financed by the federal government, not their own state governments. Alfred Glaze Smith Jr. addressed this issue convincingly forty years ago. He argued that South Carolinians opposed internal improvements after 1820 because they were funded primarily by the tariff, which Carolinians wanted lowered. The South Carolina Senate resolved in 1824 "that it is an unconstitutional exercise of power, on the part of Congress, to tax the citizens of one state to make roads and canals for the benefit of the citizens of another state." South Carolinians had no opposition to internal improvements, per se, only those financed by federal taxes. Smith, Economic Readjustment of an Old Cotton State, 15. Genovese likewise insists that throughout the antebellum period backcountry farmers "remained isolated, self-sufficient, and politically, economically, and socially backward." Genovese, Political Economy of Slavery, 25. Steven Hahn argued that upcountry farmers in antebellum Georgia were "fundamentally committed to producing for household consumption and local exchange, wary of 'economic development,'" and that "kinship rather than the marketplace mediated most productive relations . . . and family self-sufficiency proved the fundamental concern." Market exchange, when undertaken at all, "served their interests rather than dominated their lives." Hahn, Roots of Southern Populism, 89, 29, 39. Ruth Bogin, in a recent article on petitioning in post-Revolutionary America, argues that petitioners' goals and attitudes reflect a "lower class ideology" which emphasized equality of opportunity, an extension of E.P. Thompson's "moral economy of the poor," rather than an acceptance of "laissez-faire ideology that divested the moneyed 'few' of moral responsibility for the welfare of the 'many." While I agree that South Carolina petitions stress economic equality in terms of equal access to markets and profits, I would disagree that this in turn demonstrates that urban artisans and backcountry farmers were attempting to fashion "a sense of group identity-in fact the consciousness of a laboring class" which favored a more equal distribution of wealth and who struggled against the concept "that profit alone should drive economic policy." Like most moral-economy historians, Bogin is forced to

Most petitioners desired new roads, ferries, and bridges, or requested that river obstructions be cleared. Others wanted canals. Everyone, however, wanted improvements that would increase the speed while decreasing the costs of shipping goods to Charleston. Over fifty "free-holders living on the Edisto River" requested a road between Orangeburgh and Slann's Bridge "whereof the intercourse between your petitioners settlements both with the town of Orangeburgh and Charleston would be more convenient and direct." Christopher Tatum and over 240 other Camden District residents wanted a new road and ferry to shorten their route to Charleston. Residents of St. Paul's and St. Bartholomew's parish in the lowcountry asked that a new ferry be established on the Edisto River to facilitate farmers from "Augusta, Long Cane, [and] Ninety-Six" on their way to the port. Others in St. Bartholomew's complained that they lacked a public road to Charleston and could not "get anything to or from thence but with much loss and great difficulty." More than forty people from Fairfield and

admit that "the petitioners studied here accepted the capitalism of their day." Bogin, "Petitioning and the New Moral Economy of Post-Revolutionary America," <u>William and Mary Ouarterly</u> 45 (July 1988): 391-425.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Petition no. 48, February 15, 1785, in Lark Emerson Adams, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1785-1786. The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1979), 88-89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Camden District, February 6, 1786, Petitions, 1782-1883, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH; Petition no. 155, February 6, 1786, <u>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786</u>, 376.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup>Petition no. 134, February 2, 1786, Ibid., 366-367.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of the Upper Part of St. Bartholomew's Parish, March 13, 1787, Petitions, SCDAH; Petition of March 13, 1787, in Michael E. Stevens, ed., Journals of the House of Representatives, 1787-1788, The State Records of South

Richland counties in Camden District asked that a new public road be built so that they might increase their commerce with Charleston, arguing that they had been "for two years past obstructed in our common intercourse with the metropolis of this state in carrying our produce and the common necessaries therefrom." Settlers near the Broad and Saluda rivers wanted a ferry at Culpepper's Plantation as a "near and ready way to Charleston and Savannah." Orangeburgh District farmers proposed to build a bridge over the Edisto River "to remove every impediment to the conveyance of staples to the capital, by which means the farmer will be enabled to furnish the necessaries of life at a much cheaper rate, and to dispose of his produce to the merchant on easier terms." Backcountry farmers near the Saluda River and surrounding creeks sought a public road near Anderson's Ferry "to carry their produce to Charleston." Over 100 citizens in distant York County, on the North Carolina border, simply requested a ferry over the Congaree River to help overcome the "many difficulties" they faced in transporting their

Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 214.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup>Petition of February 11, 1789, in Michael E. Stevens, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1789-1790, The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 121-122.

<sup>124</sup>Petition of January 21, 1788, Ibid., 336-337.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Orangeburgh District, January 14, 1791, Petitions, SCDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Various Places in South Carolina Asking that a Public Road Be Laid Out From Anderson's Ferry on Great Saludy to Charleston, February 1, 1787, Petitions, SCDAH.

produce to Charleston. <sup>127</sup> A group of 122 persons on the Salkehatchic River demanded a more widespread access to Charleston. They resented the fact that the only road to the metropolis in their district was convenient only for "three or four families instead of one hundred families," which put them under "great disadvantage and inconvenience." <sup>128</sup>

Some petitioners requested transportation improvements so that South Carolina might reap the benefits of their trade rather than neighboring Georgia. Many backcountry farmers in fact lived closer to Augusta and the Savannah River, and many flocked to Georgia immediately after the evacuation to buy and sell goods. <sup>155</sup> James Mayson and fifty-three other inhabitants of Ninety-Six and Orangeburgh asked that the Edisto River be cleared for the "easy carriage of tobacco, flour, lumber and naval stores to Charleston." Otherwise they would be forced to transport their products down the Savannah River and warned that "once trade has fixed itself in a certain channel neither art nor industry can change it." <sup>155</sup> Over two hundred other residents of Ninety Six voiced the same request, arguing that bud roads and impassable crecks and rivers forced them to trade in Augusta "and the profits of our trade which of right ought to center within this state is enjoyed by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup>Petition of December 13, 1791, in Michael E. Stevens, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1791, The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina, 1985), 389.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup>Petition of January 18, 1790, <u>Journal of the House of Representatives</u>, 1789-1790, 348.

<sup>119</sup> See Lewis Lesterjette to William Logan, January 25, 1783, enclosure in Petition of William Logan and Others Concerning the Business Practices of Certain British Merchants in Charleston, January 30, 1783, Petitions, SCIDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup>Petition no. 176, February 14, 1786, <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1785-1786</u>, 404-405.

the Georgian to the material loss and disadvantage of the planting and mercantile interest of this state. "IJ These articulate economic threats found their mark, and the potential loss of trade spurred the legislature to action. It promptly hired a Mr. H. Felder to clear the river; if he failed, they would find someone cles, but above all Charleston must not lose such profitable trade to its budding rivals across the Savannah River. "IJ An undated petition from "Citizens of Charleston" urged lawmakers to pursue "spirited measures" in improving public roads from the interior to the coastal port in order "to keep the products of our state in channels running to our own maritime ports." They fretted over long upcountry staple crops (particularly cotton) to Augusta either because of poor or non-existent roads leading to Charleston. Turnpikes from the metropolis to "the principal inland towns and cross roads" would staunch the flow of goods away from Charleston "and we should see our state flourishing, our commercial cities raising their heads above the present langour that exists from a diversion of so much of their trade." "IJ

Other South Carolinians sought to enhance economic opportunities by petitioning for the incorporation of new towns and markets, the establishment of tobacco inspection warehouses, or encouragement of home manufactures. Promoters of backcountry towns hoped to capture much of the trade being lost across the Savannah River because of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup>Petition of February 19, 1787, <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1787-1788</u>, 111-112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup>Committee Report no. 275, <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1785</u>, 1786, 484, 489.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup>Petition of the Citizens of Charleston for the Adoption of a plan to improve roads, undated, Petitions, SCDAH.

high transport costs to Charleston. Nearly two hundred residents of Ninety-Six District asked that a town be established on land belonging to one John Garett directly across the Savannah River from Augusta. Garrett's land was "formed by nature for the purpose of building a town lying very high with a very extensive view." The new town could accommodate upcountry farmers "with a repository for their produce" without having to carry it across the river to Georgia "which is very troublesome and expensive." A town would also stimulate backcountry growth by providing an accessible market for the surrounding "rich and fertile" countryside, where indigo, tobacco, hemp, wheat, and cotton could be grown. Transporting crops to Charleston using existing transportation systems "eats up the greatest part of its value," a new town would thus replace Augusta as the "first and most advantageous market."

Upcountry farmers John and Richard Winn and John Vanderhors purchased land between the Broad and Catawba rivers and "at the request of a number of inhabitants living in the district" laid out the town of Winnsborough. They asked that "a market may be by law established in the said town and fairs kept and held there" where nearby farmers could trade "horses, cattle, grain, hemp, flax, tobacco, indigo, and all sorts of produce and merchandise." "131 laland merchant-planters Joseph and William Kershaw and John Chesmut established the new town of Chatham in Cheraw District and also

<sup>134</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Ninety-Six District, 1784, Petitions, SCDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup>Petition of John Winn, Richard Winn, and John Vanderhorst, February 19, 1785, Petitions, SCDAH; Petition no. 64, February 21, 1785, <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1785-1786, 117-118. See also Committee Report no. 68, and Bill no. 14, March 9, 1785, Ibid., 126, 204.

petitioned to establish markets and fairs. Joseph Kershaw was certainly no stranger to organizing new towns. He established a store at Pine Tree Hill in 1758 and eleven years later chartered it as Camden. With his brothers Ely and William he went into business with Charleston merchants William Ancrum and Aaron Loocock. They became the largest merchants in the Cheraws District, and in addition to their mercantile business the partners owned flour and grist mills, tobacco inspection warehouses, indigo mills, and a brewery and distillery. Me Georgetown residents meanwhile complained that they lacked a sufficient market to manage the great quantities of "butchers meat, poultry, butter, etc. that come for sale from the country." Camden citizens asked that their town be incorporated both for "the encouragement of trade and the preservation of peace, order, and good government."

Orangeburgh pinned tis economic hopes on the establishment of a tobacco inspection warehouse, which it hoped would "open to us a new and extensive commerce, and an immediate mart for our commerce." A warehouse would attract new merchants, new stores, and "land purchasers" (the word "speculators" had been crossed out), raising real estate values and stimulating "the exertions of husbandry." Tobacco would no longer have to be rolled to Charleston over "miry roads and heavy swamps," but instead might be sold directly to merchants who could afford the costs of owater transport to the coast.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup>Petition no. 123, March 1, 1785, Ibid., 175-176; <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House</u>, 2:374-377.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Georgetown, January 1, 1787, Petitions, SCDAH.
<sup>138</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Camden, January 25, 1791, Records of the General Assembly, Petitions, SCDAH.

The legislature agreed and granted Orangeburgh a warehouse. <sup>139</sup> The fledgling capital city of Columbia also petitioned for and received an inspection warehouse for tobacco, flour, and pork, citing the great advantage to the city's merchants and to upcountry farmers in general. <sup>140</sup> The additional tobacco facilities in the upcountry evidently paid off. By the late 1790s Charleston merchants complained that existing warehouses in the city would hold only "half the present crop," and without more warehouses farmers would be forced to pay high rates to store the crop privately. <sup>141</sup>

Other South Carolinians sought economic inclusiveness by petitioning the legislature to encourage home manufactures. The economic hopes of these small producers clashed with the tastes of Charleston planters accustomed to wearing the best European fashions and the city merchants accustomed to importing them. Two petitions, one urban and one rural, from opposite corners of the state, are suggestive. The first, from sixty-six seamstresses in Charleston, asked the legislature to raise import duties on "ready made clothes" that could be manufactured in Charleston and would "give employment to your petitioners." The second petition, from York County on the North

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Orangeburgh District, January 14, 1791, Petitions, SCDAH; Committee Report, January 15, 1791, Committee Reports, 1776-1866, SCDAH; <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1791, 36-38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Columbia, December 1, 1796, Committee Report on the Petition of the Inhabitants of Columbia, December 14, 1796, Petitions, Committee Reports, SCDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Petition of Sundry Merchants, November 29, 1798, Petition of Tobacco Planters in the Interior Country, November 29, 1798, Petitions, SCDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup>Petition of Sundry Seamstresses of the City of Charleston, February 25, 1788, Petitions, SCDAH; <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1789-1790, 69. The

Carolina border, also requested that import duties be raised on anything that could be manufactured "with any degree of perfection within our state, more especially these that are for the support of luxury as will give encouragement to our home manufacturing and agriculture." This same petition requested constitutional revision, internal improvements, and asked that the Court of Chancery be modified so that "the poor as well as the rich [may] receive advantages from it." This from a group of people who lived on the frontier between North and South Carolina and who, according to the prevailing historical interpretation, "exhibited neither an interest in nor an understanding of the acquisitive, entrepreneurial instincts of northern farmers," and who remained "isolated, self-sufficient, and politically, economically, and socially backward." Clearly both urban artisans and backcountry farmers hoped to reap the economic benefits of independence.

The legislature gave technological innovations a much warmer welcome and greater support. The South Carolina legislature consistently supported technological improvements throughout the postwar decades, repeatedly demonstrating a commitment

legislative committee which considered this petition in general agreed with the petitioners, but agreed that 'this sed domb een the policy's owlel-regulated states to give a monopoly of the home market to domestic industry in articles of general use, except where the object has been to establish the manufactory of some particular article, and where there has been a prospect of making it in time as cheap, or cheaper, than it could be imported from about 2. They went on to say that the Tederal Government would soon have jurisdiction over this matter anyway, so it would be better to present these petitions to the state's representatives and let them take up the matter in Congress. Bid, \$8.49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup>Petition of February 1, 1787, <u>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1787-1788</u>, 32-33.

Egerton, "Markets Without a Market Revolution," 218; Genovese, <u>Political Economy of Slavery</u>, 25.

to economic growth and development. In early 1785 the House wrote to Virginian James Rumsey, who had "invented a machine for working boats against the stream," to inform him "that this House will give the most ample encouragements to this invention and reward suitable to its importance." Four years later Rumsey petitioned for exclusive rights in South Carolina to his various machines, "one for propelling boats on the water by the power of steam, another for raising water to be applied to the working of mills, and two new invented boilers for generating steam." South Carolinians proved equally inventive. Isaae Briggs and William Longstreet requested and received a patent for their own steam "machine." Fobert Thomas Hornby devised a "horizontal wind machine" that he claimed had a variety of uses, including "beating of rice, manufacturing indigo, grinding wheat and bolting the flour, sawing lumber, supplying lands with water, and draining lands when overflowed." Peter Belin's two machines could also be used for beatine rice and irrisetting or draining finding.

<sup>145</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786, 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>166</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1789-1790, 25. The Committee that considered Rumsey's request reported that he should be given a patent for fourteen years. The bill was read once, on March 2, 1789, but the journal records no further consideration of the bill. 1bid, 177, 213.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1787-1788, 462. They received a patent for fourteen years, p. 463.

<sup>168</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1783-1784, 497. The Committee report on Hornby's petition is not extant.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives. 1785-1786, 427. Belin received a fourteen-year patent. See pp. 485, 487-488, 498, 511, 580, 596. Samuel Knight of St. James Goose Creek Parish also requested and received a patent for a machine that beat rice. See Journals of the House of Representatives. 1787-1788, 371, 377, 393, 398, 421.

cotton gin, "knowing it to be your desire to encourage every attempt in an individual to facilitate the cultivation or manufactory of any commodity which may be of general utility," <sup>150</sup> John Macnair and Hugh Templeton "with great labour and considerable expence" built a device for "carding and spinning cotton" and requested "patronage and assistance." The lawmakers granted them a mortgage of £500 pounds for three years. <sup>151</sup>

All of these petitions—whether for internal improvements, towns, markets, manufactures, or inventions—reveal a great deal about the legacy of the American Revolution in South Carolina. Freed from the restraints of the British mercantile system, South Carolinians, like other Americans, sought to capitalize on independence through transportation improvements, the incorporation of new towns and markets, the establishment of tobacco inspection warehouses, increased support for domestic manufacturing, and technological innovations. South Carolinians demonstrated clearly both their economic optimism and their desire for more widespread market access. They eagerly embraced and encouraged greater market participation, while Charleston merchants and planters recognized that internal improvements ould bring economic unity that would heal sectional wounds caused by political differences.

The most ambitious efforts to forge greater economic links between Charleston and the upcountry were the various canal projects begun in the mid 1780s. Between 1786 and 1800 the South Carolina legislature incorporated four inland navigation companies—

<sup>456, 463-464, 500, 512.</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1787-1788, 542.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1792-1794, 55, 138.

the Santee-Cooper, the Edisto-Ashley, the Catawba-Wateree, and the Broad-Pacolet—with the express purpose of improving transportation between Charleston and the interior. 

Private investment financed these schemes and they had wide support from planters, small farmers, merchants, lawyers and artisans, who all invested in the various companies. Only the Santee-Cooper Canal Opened before 1800. Discussion and planning continued on for decades in some cases, and the economic dreams canals spawned died a slow death. Nevertheless, these projects are important as indicators of economic optimism and Carolinians' willingness to invest capital in improvements designed to optimism and Carolinians' willingness to invest capital in improvements can were ambitious commercial ventures that placed great emphasis on efficiency and economy while lowering transportation costs and opening up new markets for agricultural and manufactured goods. 

They represent very singularly the sort of economic activity that historians have traditionally argued that Southerners shunned.

Charlestonians talked of cutting a canal between the Santee and Cooper rivers in the early 1770s, but it took the Revolution to stimulate widespread interest in the project. 1<sup>54</sup> Upcountry farmers supported canals in order to enhance the value of their lands and to gain greater market access while cutting transport cost to Charleston. Many

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup>Carl L. Epting, "Inland Navigation in South Carolina and Traffic on the Columbia Canal," <u>Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association</u>, 1936, 20; Ford, <u>Origins of Southern Radicalism</u>, 16; Klein, <u>Unification of a Slowe State</u>, 244-246.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>See Peter Way, <u>Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals, 1780-1860</u> (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19; Shaw, <u>Canals For A Nation</u>, ix, 3, 18.

<sup>154</sup> South Carolina Gazette, January 18, 1770, February 15, 1773.

lowcountry planiers owned upcountry land and hoped a canal would increase real estate value. Charleston merchants hoped to staunch the flow of trade across the Savannah River to Augusta while opening up new markets for manufactured goods. And of course Charleston's elile had political motives for supporting canals. <sup>328</sup> Ralph Izard argued that the evils of an inland capital and increased democracy could be overcome by improved inland navigation: "When men of property and education are distributed through all parts of the state, an exact apportionment in the representation will be much less important than it is at present." <sup>388</sup> Izard envisioned more than political benefits, however. He hoped to have the canal pass close by his plantation as it left the Santee, and he began laying plans for the establishment of "Izardtown." <sup>387</sup> Canal promoters evidently began planning in the fall of 1784; the legislature appointed commissioners to survey the area in early 1785 and the company petitioned for incorporation in February 1786. <sup>388</sup> Many members of the company of course, sat in the General Assembly, which recognized that the canal would

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>157</sup>Rogers, <u>Evolution of a Federalist</u>, 133; Zahniser, <u>Charles Cotesworth Pinckney</u>, 77; Williams, <u>Founding Family</u>, 206.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>156</sup>Ralph Izard to General Pinckney, January 18, 1795, Ralph Izard Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>157</sup>Henry Savage Jr., <u>River of the Carolinas: The Santee</u> (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 244.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>David Ramsay reported that the Santee-Cooper Canal was a subject of much conversation in the spring of 1784. See Ramsays to Benjamin Rush, Aprila 8, 1784. Ramsay Writings, 77. The state had first authorized surveys in 1782. A. S. Salley Jr., ed., Journal of the Houses of Representatives of South Garolina. Anamar 8, 1782. February 26, 1782 (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1916), 77. See also South Carolina Gazette and Chentan Advertiser. December 3, 1784, South Carolina Gazette and Public Advertiser. November 12, 1785; Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786. 140, 378-379.

be "of utmost utility to the state." The legislature incorporated the company in March 1786. Company officers included a mixture of lowcountry and backcountry planters, as well as Charleston merchants and lawyers. 199

The legislature incorporated two other canal companies soon afterward. 
Promoters of the Edisto-Ashley River canal hoped to improve transportation between 
Charleston and the northwest part of the state. 

Each Like the Santee-Cooper Canal 
Company, membership included a large mixture of lowcountry and backcountry leaders. 
Members of the company included Patrick Calhoun, Andrew Pickens, Leroy Hammond, 
Nicholas Eveleigh, James Lincoln, James Mayson, and John Hunter, all prominent 
planters from the Savannah River valley. Other members included Lewis Lesterjette, 
who operated a toll bridge over the Edisto River, Dr. John Budd, a Charleston supporter 
of the backcountry, and Charleston merchants William Turpin, Thomas Wadsworth, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786, 140, 504, 510, 519, 525-526, Cooper and McCord, Sintutes at Large of South Carolina, 7:541-543, which includes the act of incorporation as well as the forty-one members of the company. Prominent lowcountry planters included Ralph Izard, John Rutledge, and Henry Laurens Jr. Among the backcountry members were Thomas Sunterl, John Chesnut, Wade Hampton, and Minor Winn. Aaron Lococok and Nathaniel Russell were two prominent Charleston merchants.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>169</sup>The legislature appointed commissioners to survey the area on March 10, 1785. The company petitioned for incorporation on February 26, 1787, and the legislature granted the incorporation on March 27, 1787. Essurais of the House of Representatives, 1785–1786, 213, 1287–1788. 143; Cooper and McCord, Stattets at Large of South Carolina, 745–854; Ford, Origina of Southern Radioslism. 16.

Adam Gilchrist. Charleston attorneys John Bee Holmes, Henry William DeSaussure,

Thomas Ree, and Jacob Read also invested in the project. 161

The Catawba-Wateree Canal Company hoped to cut a canal from the Catawba River in Camden to the North Carolina line. The legislature incorporated the company one year after the Edisto-Ashley River Company, on March 27, 1788. <sup>160</sup> Organizers included prominent Camden-area merchants and planters, as well as a number of lowcountry investors, including Ralph Izard and his son-in-law William Loughton Smith, attorney Henry William DeSaussure, and merchants Joseph Atkinson and Daniel Bourdeaux. <sup>161</sup> The Catawba Canal project represented an ambitious joint effort of Charlestonians and backcountrymen to strengthen economic ties between Charleston and the North Carolina interior. "The advantages hence arising are incalculable," John Drayton wrote, "as the riches and produce of a great part of the upper country of North Carolina may and probably will be thus easily transported to Charleston. The encouragement to agriculture and the increase of property will be great." To encourage

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>161</sup>Edisto and Ashley River Canal Company Papers in the Robert F.W. Allston Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

McZournals of the House of Representatives, 1787-1788, 143; Cooper and McCord, Statutes at Large of South Carolina, 7:549-551.

<sup>163</sup> William Loughton Smith Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>164</sup>John Drayton, A View of South Carolina As Respects Her Natural and Civil Concerns (Charleston SC: W.P. Young, 1802), 155-158.

investment, company officers asked the South Carolina legislature to exempt North Carolina goods from any restrictive duties.<sup>165</sup>

Despite such grandiose plans the only canal project to actually reach fruition before 1800 was the Santee-Cooper canal. Work began in 1792 and the canal opened in 1800 after many fales starts, financial beadsches, and much backbreaking labor. In 1786 Governor William Moultrie asked George Washington, busily promoting the Potomac Canal in Virginia, to recommend a reputable engineer. Washington replied that "it gives me great pleasure to find a spirit for inland navigation prevailing so generally" and suggested that several companies might unite to bring in a professional from Europe who "might plan and execute canals in several places." The company finally settled upon Christian Senf, a Swede who had fought with the Hessions in the war, to oversee what turned into a mammoth undertaking. The Senf rented male and female slaves from local planters for £15 to £16 per year in 1793 and expected them to move over fifty wheelbarrows of earth a day. The were 195 slaves laboring on the canal in July 1793. But all accounts the work represented at a torrid moc. as the necessary carried.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>165</sup>Petition of the Proprietors of the Catawba and Wateree Navigation, November 19, 1795, Records of the General Assembly, Petitions, SCDAH.

Maington at Mount Vernon, April 7, 1786, South Carolina Historical Magazine 83 (April 1982): 116-120; Washington to William Moultrie, May 25, 1786, Writings of Washington, 28:439-441.

<sup>167</sup> Way, Common Labour, 24.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 125-126, 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>169</sup>David Ramsay to Thomas Pinckney, July 4, 1793, Ramsay Writings, 136.

ebbed and flowed. Company officers seriously underestimated the money (and time) needed to complete the project and scrambled to keep the project afloat. They appealed to the state legislature for funding in 1789, to Northern businessmen in the early 1790s, and received "considerable sums" from the Bank of South Carolina. "30 One year after digging began only four hundred yards had been completed." 19 Still, company directors remained optimistic, expecting completion by 1796. "3" "Our Santee Canal goes on well," David Ramsuy reported in July 1794, though "the payments of ten pounds on each share fall very hard. "13" Two years later Governor Arnoldus Vanderhorst informed the state legislature of "the great progress made towards the completion" of the work, which promised "wast advantagees to the arriculture and commerce of the western parts of the

<sup>&</sup>quot;Priction of Several Companies Incorporated for the Purpose of Opening the Inland Navigation of his State, February 14, 1789, Petitions, SCDAHF, Rabb Eard and William Loughton Smith met with New York businessmen in late 1791 and Izard was confident that "they will join in to the amount of two fifths of the whole necessary for carrying the business into complete execution." Eard to Edward Rutledge, November 9, 1791, Ralph Izard Papers, South Carolinana Library, Sochechocaula-Lianour, Travelig Through the United States of North America. 1:574; Rogers, Charleston In the Age of the Pinchenes. 116-117.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>171</sup>Ramsay to Thomas Pinckney, July 4, 1793, Ramsay Writings, 136.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup>John Faucherund Grimke to "My Duet Friend," March 17, 1794, John Faucheraud Grimke Papers, South Caroliniana Library; David Ramssy to John Kean, July 10, 1794, David Ramssy Papers, South Caroliniana Library. See also David Ramssy to John Faucheraud Grimke, October 9, 1785, Grimke Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>175</sup>Ramsay to John Kean, July 10, 1794, Ramsay Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

state." Three years later Ramsay ruefully told a friend that he expected the canal to be in operation "in two months." Originally projected to take three years and cost £55,000, construction on the canal had at that point been going on for over seven years and had cost over £400,000 sterling. Ramsay optimistically hoped nevertheless that the completed canal "will I trust amply repay us all."

The Santee-Cooper River canal finally opened in 1800 at a cost of \$750,000.<sup>18</sup> Despite its troubles, the finished canal was an impressive eighteenth-century engineering achievement. The canal left the Cooper River thirty miles above Charleston and ran due north for twenty-two miles to connect with the Santee River three miles west of Pineville. The waterway measured four feet deep, thirty-five feet whide at the top, twenty feet at the bottom, and had twelve locks and eight aqueducts.<sup>17</sup> Though a tremendous physical undertaking, the canal could claim only moderate financial success. Company officers told Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin in 1808 that the canal had cut transport costs from the interior in half, but the narrow ten-foot-wide locks forced larger boats to bypass the canal enroute to the sea. After eight years in operation, the canal had never collected more than \$13,000 in any one year and operatine costs along amounted to \$7,000

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>174</sup>Governor Arnoldus Vanderhorst Message, November 29, 1796, Governor's Messages, SCDAH.

<sup>175</sup> Ramsay to Jedediah Morse, July 20, 1799, Ramsay Writings, 149-150.

<sup>176</sup> Epting, "Inland Navigation," 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Drayton, <u>View of South Carolina</u>, 156; Shaw, <u>Canals For A Nation</u>, 16. For an account of the route the canal followed and the plantations it passed through, see Savage, <u>River of the Carolinas</u>, 247-248.

annually.178 The canal proved to be a costly burden to investors but did little to dampen enthusiasm for the potential economic bonanza that other canals might bring to Charleston. The same report that painted such a gloomy financial portrait of the Santee-Cooper canal fairly glowed about the promise of the still-uncompleted Catawba-Wateree canal. The Catawba River flowed from the North Carolina mountains through "the heart of South Carolina," and its source lay near the Kanawha and Tennessee Rivers. A completed Catawba Canal would thus open to Charleston "the trade of Tennessee Kentucky, and a great part of the settlements on the Ohio."179 Here indeed was economic optimism on a grand scale. Virginians of course had the same dream, but it would be New York's Erie Canal that eventually captured the Ohio Valley trade. Nevertheless. even into the early nineteenth century Charlestonians envisioned their city as the southern entrepôt for a vast national hinterland. In 1818 the state legislature created a Board of Internal Improvements and spent nearly \$2,000,000 over the next two years on transportation improvements designed to link the upcountry with the fall line. 180 Governor Thomas Bennett in 1822 adopted the same rhetoric used a generation earlier to describe the economic benefits of internal improvements. More canals and roads, he said. would enable Carolinians "to enter into successful competition with their western brethren in the staple commodity of this state, give life and facility to industry, develop

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>178</sup>United States Congress, American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, 38 vols. (Washington DC: Gales and Seaton, 1832-1861), Class 10, Miscellaneous, 2 vols., 1:730, 790.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 1:791.

Ford, Origins of Southern Radicalism, 16, 18.

the resources, add to the political importance, and establish the prosperity of the state."

Canals thus represented the economic desires of many Americans in the post-war decades, and Southerners shared in the passion of "canal mania." Despite the disappointments of the Santee-Cooper canal, many Carolinians invested in all of the incorporated canal companies and these commercial ventures served to forge statewide economic links. Carolinians with divergent political goals found that they shared many of the same economic aspirations.

The creation of banks in the postwar decades facilitated investments in internal improvements, agricultural innovations, and new mercantile ventures. Banks played an important role in promoting Americans economic growth and Charlestonians, like other Americans, enthusiastically supported the establishment of these financial institutions in their city. <sup>18</sup> Banks in Charleston give further proof of planter-merchant commitment to institutions designed to promote economic growth. Eugene D. Genovese argues that Southern banks, though capitalist institutions, existed primarily as tools of the planters

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>181</sup>Southern Chronicle, December 4, 1822, quoted in Smith, <u>Economic</u> Readiustment. 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>There were no bunks in America before the establishment of the Bank of North America in 1781. There were only free banks in Operation when the Bank of the United States began operating in December 1791. Americans established twenty-nine banks between 1790 and 1800. For the importance and growth of banks see Edwin J. Perkins, American Bublis Finance, and Financial Services. 1700-1815. (Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 1994), 25-231; (Eijer, "Rise of Capathism in the Early Republic," (16-165, Kulkorf, Agartian Christon of American Capathism. 108, Wood, Radicalism of the American Capathism. 316-318; Denjouin J. Kelbauer, "Susce Chartered American Proprise of Capathism of the Christ War (Princeton N: Pinterson University Press, 1997), 40-225.
Bany Hammond, Banks and Politics in American From the Revolution to the Christ War (Princeton N: Pinterson University Press, 1997), 40-225.

and thus differed significantly from Northern financial institutions. Southern banks, he writes, "were primarily designed to lend the planters money for outlays that were economically feasible and socially acceptable in a slave society: the movement of crops, the purchase of land and slaves, and little else."183 But Charleston banks in the 1790s. dominated not by planters but by leading members of Charleston's mercantile community, played a much more expansive role in South Carolina's economy than this limited description implies.184 Contemporaries argued that banks would provide a circulating medium of exchange in South Carolina while increasing levels of capital for investment in canals, mercantile activity, and of course land. Moreover, Charleston's banks did more than simply receive money. As Bray Hammond has noted, for every dollar invested by stockholders, these banks loaned two, three, four or five dollars 185 United States Senator Ralph Izard of South Carolina supported a Charleston branch of the Bank of the United States because it would "facilitate our inland navigation business, and establish the credit and importance of our state, and promote the happiness of our citizens in all parts of it."186 Charleston entrepreneurs attempted to start a bank in 1783, just after

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Genovese argues that "the banking system of the South serves as an excellent illustration of an ostensibly capitalist institution that worked to augment the power of the planters and retard the development of the bourgeoiste." Genovese, <u>Political Economy of Slavery</u>, 19-21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>186</sup>Several of the leading merchants were of course also planters, but as will be shown they did not limit their activity to purchasing land and slaves and moving crops.

<sup>185</sup> Hammond, Banks and Politics in America, 146.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>186</sup>Ralph Izard to Edward Rutledge, November 9, 1791, Ralph Izard Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

the close of the war, but could not raise the necessary \$100,000 in capital at time when planters and merchants spent existing capital on rebuilding their estates and fortunes.<sup>117</sup> In 1788 the state House of Representatives appointed a committee to consider a proposal for establishing a state bank, but nothing resulted from the committee's favorable report.<sup>118</sup> The Charleston Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in bringing a branch of the Bank of the United States to Charleston in 1792 and establishing the Bank of South Carolina in the same year.

These banks lived up to the hopes and promises of their investors. Bank notes acted as a circulating medium of exchange in South Carolina while increasing levels of capital for transportation schemes, business opportunities, and land. David Ramsay asserted that after the scarcity of money in the economic crises of the 1780s, the establishment of banks in South Carolina in the 1790s, particularly by facilitating a circulating medium, amounted to a "revolution in the fiscal concerns of South Carolina." One visitor noted in 1796 that "trade and commerce have been greatly enlarged by means of the money advanced to the merchants, and agriculture raised by sums of money advanced to distressed planters, whose settlements would otherwise have been sold." The bank also loaned the Santee Canal company "considerable sums." and

Misse South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, January 27, 1784; David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, April 8, 1784, "Ramsay Writings," 77: "We have 30,000 dollars subscribed for a bank and hope to begin in June". J. Maudila Lessene, The Bank of the State of South Carolina: A General and Political History (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina: Pess, 1970). 5.

Journals of the House of Representatives, 1787-1788, 478, 480-482.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>189</sup>Ramsay, History of South Carolina, 1670-1808, 2:189.

"thus promoted this work, which is generally deemed highly important for the agriculture and trade of South Carolina.\*\* The banks thus reflected the merchant-planner community's interest in and commitment to financial institutions which would foster connomic growth and development.

The controversial Bank of the United States opened in Philadelphia on December 12, 1791, and branches opened the following spring in Boston, New York, Baltimore, and Charleston. 

The Charleston branch, known as the Office of Discount and Deposit, opened April 10, 1792, with Chamber of Commerce member Daniel DeSaussaure as president and his business partner Josiah Smith Jr. as cashier. 

Almost simultaneously, Charlestonians established the Bank of South Carolina on March 8, 1792, with a capital stock of \$200,000.

Thomas Jones, a merchant-planter entrepreneur, became president of the Bank of South Carolina in 1793.

He was a member of the Chamber of Commerce and also a director in the Santee Canal Company from its establishment in 1786 until his death forty years later. Eight of the bank's fourteen directors were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>190</sup>Rochefoucault-Liancourt, <u>Travels Through the United States of North America</u>, 1:574.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>191</sup>For the Bank of the United States, see Hammond, <u>Banks and Politics in</u> America, 114-143.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>192</sup>Lesesne, <u>Bank of the State of South Carolina</u>, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>199</sup>City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, March 9, 1792; Lesesne, <u>Bank of the State of South Carolina</u>. 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>194</sup>Jones owned five plantations in St. Paul Parish and 169 slaves in both Charleston and St. Paul Parish. <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House</u>, 3:387.

members of Charleston's Chamber of Commerce: Jones, John Berney, William Sommersall, John Edwards, John Lloyd, Edward Penman, Joshua Hargreaves, and James Miller. 

"In The Bank's directors applied to the state legislature for incorporation in 1796, arguing that the bank had increased circulation, stimulated industry by making capital 

"active and productive," and made commercial credit widely available. It had, in short, served the local economy and stimulated economic growth. 

"Memberson lawyer Henry W. DeSaussure introduced the bill, but the House defeated it on the third reading, partly because backcountry legislators thought the bank restricted loans to lowcountry members. 

Nevertheless, the bank continued to thrive, reporting a dividend on its stock early in 1797, and directors made plans to build a new building in Charleston. The legislature finally chartered the bank in 1801. 

""

South Carolinians organized the State Bank of South Carolina in 1801, the Union Bank of South Carolina, with a capital of \$1,000,000, and the Planters and Mechanics Bank, also with a capital of \$1,000,000, both in 1810. The name of the latter bank suggests that Charleston's earlier banks had not been ancillary to agricultural interests, as Genovese suggests. In fact, in 1812 the state chartered its own bank, the Bank of the State of South Carolina, primarily to aid planters and farmers. All of these banks remained sound financial institutions. There were no bank failures in South Carolina

<sup>156</sup>City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, April 26, April 27, 1792. In addition to the Chamber members, John Splatt Cripps, Sims White, Robert Dewar, William Jones, and George Forest also served as directors.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., October 27, 1796.

<sup>197</sup> Lesesne, Bank of the State of South Carolina, 7-9.

until the end of the Civil War in 1865.198 Though the federal government liquidated the Charleston branch of the Bank of the United States in 1810, Charleston by 1812 had four private banks with combined capital of over \$3,000,000. By comparison in 1812 New York had eight banks with capital totaling over \$13,000,000. Boston four banks with \$6,800,000, Philadelphia four banks with \$6,393,000, and Baltimore eight banks capitalized at \$6,750,000.199 Thus Charleston's merchant-planter community was not averse to banks and monied financial institutions. Upcountry farmers often opposed Charleston bank charters, as they had in 1797, not because they were culturally opposed to financial institutions, but because they feared lowcountry monopolization of loans. resources, and capital. The South Carolina backcountry overwhelmingly favored the incorporation of the Bank of the State of South Carolina because it was designed to facilitate agricultural rather than commercial loans.200 The Bank of South Carolina in the 1790s was not designed solely, as Genovese suggests, to "lend the planters money for outlays that were economically feasible and socially acceptable in a slave society."

<sup>190</sup> Hammond, Banks and Politics in America, 168, 171.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Sec Herman Krooss, "Financial Institutions," in David J. Gilchrist, ed., <u>The Growth of Scaport Citiss.</u> 1790-1825 (Charlottesville VA: University Press of Vrignin, 1967), 110-111. See also Perkins, <u>American Public Finance and Financial Services</u>, 273-274. In addition to four basis in Souda Carolina, bere were seven banks in Alexandria, Vrignins by 1820. See A. Glenn Cottoders, "The "Projecting Spirit". Social, Economic, and Cultural Change in Posts Revolutionary Northern Virginia, 1780-1805," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Febrical, 1997, 310-372.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>200</sup>See Lessene, <u>Bank of the State of South Carolina</u>, 12-20. Bray Hammond notes that state banks flourished under the Jeffersonian Republican state legislatures, mostly in reaction to the supposed monopolies of Federalist-controlled banks that would not lend money to Republicans. Hammond, <u>Banks and Politics in America</u>, 146.

Charleston's financial institutions did not function primarily "to augment the power of the planters and retard the development of the bourgeoisie." De creating capital, providing a widely-circulating medium of exchange, Joans to internal improvement companies, short-term Joans to Charleston merchants, and financing agricultural improvements, Charleston banks furthered the development of a democratic political economy.

The presence of and enthusiasm for banks in Charleston further dispels the notion that late-eighteenth-century Southerners were anti-capitalist, anti-modern, or anxious about economic development. The directors and investors in Southern banks, as well as their customers, manifested a clear commitment to liberal economic growth, ultimately ensuring widespread access to capital while expanding economic opportunity throughout the state. Charlestonians and South Carolinians of all ranks demonstrated repeatedly an economic optimism and commitment to liberal economic development of their city, state, and region, whether seeking new trading partners, experimenting with new crops or employing new techniques for growing old ones, opening new markets, establishing the Charleston Chamber of Commerce and the South Carolina Agricultural Society, building roads and bridges, establishing ferries, incorporating towns and markets, protecting inventions, investing in canal companies, or establishing banks. The democratic impulses of the American Revolution may have dimmed Charleston's political prospects, but in the mid-1790s the city's economic feture looked bright indeed. Banks made investment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>201</sup>Genovese, <u>Political Economy of Slavery</u>, 21. For a recent interpretation of banks in the antebellum period that contradicts Genovese, see Larry Schweikart, <u>Banking</u> in the <u>American South from the Age of Jackson to Reconstruction</u> (Baton Rouge LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

capital widely available, internal improvements promised to open up the interior, shortstaple cotton production expanded inland rapidly, and technological innovations made agriculture more efficient and profitable. The economic opportunities of the democratic marketplace could go far in healing the wounds of political conflict. But continued economic prosperity had become even more entwined in the post-war years with the survival and expansion of slavery, and in the early 1790s disturbing clouds blew in from the North, Europe, and the West Indies, heralding like a thunderclap the distant approach of more dangerous storms to come.

## CHAPTER SIX "SELF-PRESERVATION IS THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE": CHARLESTON AND SLAVERY, 1783-1800

"A child has a number of negro children to attend him, and comply with all his humours, so that the little white man learns, even before he can walk, to tyrannize over the blacks." Rochefoucault-Liancourt. 1799

"They are an indolent people, improvident, averse to labor; when emancipated, they would either starve or plunder."

William Louehton Smith. 1790

"Emancipation . . . will never be submitted to by the Southern states without a civil war."

Thomas Tudor Tucker, 1790

"We may be assured that we are engaged in a cause which will finally prosper." Samuel Hopkins, abolitionist, 1793

Despite the sweeping changes brought by economic liberalism and democratic politics, the American Revolution fastened the chains of slavery more tightly upon Charleston and South Carolina slaves. This irony has led subsequent generations of Americans to condemn the moral hypocrisy of their Revolutionary forbearers who sought political and economic freedom from Great Britain while simultaneously denying liberty to thousands of black men and women. British Tory Samuel Johnson asked derisively, "How is it we hear the loudest where for liberty amone the drivers of neonester" and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Quoted in Peter Kolchin, <u>American Slavery</u>, 1619-1877 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 76-77.

historians since have grappled with the problem of the "American paradox."2

Contemporaries certainly recognized their vulnerability to these charges. Americans from

different colonies and regions confronted the inconsistencies in different ways.

Ultimately, no singular reaction prevailed because America contained many different varieties of slavery and varying levels of commitment to the institution.<sup>3</sup> But how did

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>The literature on slavery in the Revolutionary era is vast, and almost all of it deals in some way with the "naradox." but see especially Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," Journal of American History 59 (1972): 5-29; Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 269-374; Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York; W.W. Norton, 1975), 295-387: Donald Robinson, Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971); William W. Freehling, "The Founding Fathers and Slavery," American Historical Review 77 (1972): 81-93: Duncan J. MacLeod. Slavery. Race and the American Revolution (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974); David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823 (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), esp. 255-284; John Chester Miller, The Wolf By the Ears: Thomas Jefferson and Slavery (New York: The Free Press, 1977); Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Constitutional Convention: Making a Covenant With Death," in Richard Beeman et al., eds., Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity (Chanel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 188-225: Sylvia R, Frey, "Liberty, Equality, and Slavery: The Paradox of the American Revolution," in Jack P. Greene, ed., The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 230-252; Paul Finkelman, Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson (Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996). For the "paradox" theme as explored in South Carolina historiography, see Jack P. Greene, "Slavery or Independence": Some Reflections on the Relationship Among Liberty, Black Bondage, and Equality in Revolutionary South Carolina," South Carolina Historical Magazine 80 (July 1979): 193-214; Russell R. Menard, "Slavery, Economic Growth, and Revolutionary Ideology in the South Carolina Lowcountry," in Ronald Hoffman et al., eds., The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period, 1763-1790 (Charlottesville VA: University Press of Virginia, 1988), 244-274; Robert A. Olwell, "Domestick Enemies': Slavery and Political Independence in South Carolina, May 1775-March 1776," Journal of Southern History 55 (February 1989); 21-48.

Jra Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," <u>American Historical Review</u> 85 (February 1980): 44-78.

slavery become more secure, at least in the South, as the result of a progressive, modern revolution, one of the capstones of the Age of Enlightenment and Reason? Part of the answer, of course, lies in the fact that most eighteenth-century Americans did not define slavery as "anti-progressive" or "anti-modern." Certainly most South Carolinians did not, although even there some saw the contradiction and acted upon it. Most, however. did not. In fact, the reaction there was quite the opposite: While the American Revolution forced many Americans to question and ultimately condemn slavery, most Charlestonians became convinced that their political and economic prosperity rested more than ever upon slavery's survival and expansion in the region. This chapter seeks to understand how slavery evolved from a widespread American institution to an increasingly Southern one, and how and why Charlestonians and other Carolinians. despite the spread of democratic politics and economic liberalism in the last decades of the eighteenth century, became even more committed to an institution that would increasingly become defined as outmoded and uncivilized by the majority of the "modern" trans-Atlantic world.

Historians of slavery in the Revolutionary South agree that while the institution became more firmly entrenched, the Revolution also brought increased autonomy to the

<sup>&</sup>quot;The best recent discussion of how Southerners, particularly South Carolinians, reconciled the contradictions between alwayer and progress is Joyce E. Chipilin, Au Southerners of the Carolinians, reconciled the contradictions between days leaves to the the two tests of the Chap Hill NiC Virturesity of North Carolina Press, 1993). See also David Halcett Fischer, "Virginia Freedom Ways: The Anglican Idea of Hegemonic Liberty," in Albinois Sees. Trans Hindia Polloways in America (New York, Cheford Libertshy Press, 1993). Sees the David Briton Davids, Statesty and Hinman Progress (New York Cheford University Press, 1984), 154-115.

region's slaves.\(^1\) Indeed, the upheavals of war in the lowcountry and the occupation of Charleston further unwound the already tenuous bonds of white authority. In Charleston, where over 16,000 people occupied the space of a few square miles and residential segregation was unknown, white and black intermingled constantly. Urban life, with its increased economic and social opportunities, allowed Charleston's large alave populars a greater degree of autonomy than almost anywhere else in America. Even before the chaos of the Revolutionary War, the increased economic and social opportunities of the urban militus and the structure of slavery in the city allowed Charleston's slaves a great degree of independence. As Claudia Dale Goldin has observed, "far from being a rigid economic system, slavery was extremely flexible—most apparently so in the cities." The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>The seminal works on slavery in eighteenth-century Charleston and South Carolina are Peter H. Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina From 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974); Ira Berlin, "The Revolution in Black Life," in Alfred F. Young, ed., The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism (DeKalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 349-382; Philip D. Morgan, "Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700 to 1880," William and Mary Quarterly 39 (October 1982): 563-599; Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry, 1760-1810," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 83-142; Morgan, "Black Life in Eighteenth-Century Charleston," Perspectives in American History New Series 1 (1984): 187-232; Frey, Water From the Rock; Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), esp. 108-142: Wood, "Liberty Is Sweet': African-American Freedom Struggles in the Years Before White Independence," in Alfred F. Young, ed., Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism (DeKalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 149-184.

Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820-1860; A Quantitative History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 127. For a similar discussion of the differences between urban and rural slavery in the antebellum period, see Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

structure of slavery in pre-Revolutionary Charleston was thus fluid and slaves had a great deal of freedom. Black Charlestonians constantly carried out individual acts of rebellion and whites tolerated them largely because they had no choice if society was going to function in any coherent, normative way. One visitor complained in 1772 that most blacks in Charleston refused to take off their hats to whites in the city's streets. Another noted clear differences between country and city slaves. "A Stranger" complained that while country slaves wore clothes "suitable to their condition," and appeared "contented, sober, modest, humble, civil, and obliging." Charleston's blacks behaved "in all respects the very reverse-abundouly rude, unmannerly, inselent, and shameless." Charleston that with a country precived differences as well. When Christopher Gadsden enlarged his wharf on the Cooper River, he preferred "strong able-bodied COUNTRY NEGROES" who could be "recommended as quiet and orderly fellows."

Similarly, a traveling Frenchman noted striking distinctions between Charleston slaves and those in the French colonies. Black Charlestonians did not "cringe or appear afmid of every white man as they do in our colonies; the Anglo-American Negro slaves have an air of self-respect about them that doesn't appear to be arrogance." He concluded that this behavior resulted from kind treatment by white masters and the "training which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>South Carolina Gazette, September 17, 1772.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., August 27, 1772.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., March 23, 1769.

the slaves receive while they are becoming civilized.\* More likely is the fact that, while the relationship between black and white rested ultimately on force, on a day-to-day basis it relied more upon a process of contentious negotiation, a give and take, in which neither side had its way. Like their counterparts in the countryside, Charleston blacks could not be watched and controlled every minute of the day. Slaves who had a great deal of autonomy in their daily lives likely reflected that independence in their demeanor. This contest defined and shaped black and white identity in Charleston, and it was the outward manifestation of this struggle that the Frenchmen so astutely observed.

The war had an enormous impact on the institution of slavery in South Carolina. 
Philip D. Morgan estimates that perhaps twenty-five thousand Carolina slaves either ran 
away or joined the British during the years of war and occupation. 
This loss represented 
one-quarter of the pre-war slave population. Hence, the large number of slaves imported 
between 1783 and 1787 accounted for most of the enormous post-war debt that planters 
accumulated in the mid-1780s. As post-war South Carolinians sought new avenues of 
trade and invested in banks and internal improvements, they also bought slaves at a 
frenzied pace. Charleston merchants imported over 5,000 slaves in 1784 alone, the most 
since 1765. 
Tower South planters snapped up slaves as quickly as they became

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Elmer Douglas Johnson, trans., "A Frenchman Visits Charleston in 1777," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 52 (April 1951): 92. There is no small irony in the fact that, as Philip D. Morgan has noted, the slaves this Frenchman described in Charleston never openly rebelled as did the slaves in the French colony of Santo Domingo in 1791.

<sup>11</sup>Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry," 113.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Jerome J. Nadelhaft, <u>The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina</u> (Orono MF: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1981), 148; Bureau of the Census

available, and Savannah merchant Joseph Clay noted that "the planter will sacrifice everything to attain negroes." "The negro business is a great object with us," he told a friend in London, "it is to the trade of this country as the soul is to the body." In addition, the shift to tidal rice cultivation and the expansion of cotton production further increased the need for additional labor. Thus, the new economic opportunities unleashed by the Revolution marched in lockstep with a renewed and strengthened commitment to the institution of slavery.

Agricultural innovation and expansion after 1790, particularly in cotton, led to an explosive growth of slavery in the backcountry. The number of slaves there increased by 76 percent between 1790 and 1800 and by 67 percent between 1800 and 1810.

Upcountry ownership of all South Carolina slaves increased from 27 percent in 1790 to 35 percent in 1800, rising to 44 percent by 1810. The proportion of slaves in the overall backcountry population rose from one-fifth in 1790 to nearly one-third by 1810. While the upcountry's white population grew 58 percent from 1790 to 1810, its black population increased 194 percent. Charleston's slave population grew 42 percent between 1770 and 1790 (from 5,831 to 8,270), though the proportion of slaves in the overall population actually declined from 54 to 51 percent. The black population of the lowcountry grew by 43 percent between 1790 and 1810, but the black proportion of the overall lowcountry

comp., <u>Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970</u>, 2 vols. (Washington DC: Bureau of the Census, 1975), 2:1173.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Joseph Clay to James Jackson, February 16, 1784, "Letters of Joseph Clay, Merchant of Savannah, 1776-1793," <u>Collections of the Georgia Historical Society</u> 8 (1913): 194-195.

population remained steady, rising only from 73 to 75 percent. The state's overall slave population grew by 83 percent between 1790 and 1810, while the white population increased by only 53 percent. In fact, after decades of enormous growth, the white population in the backcountry grew only 5 percent between 1800 and 1810, compared to 50 percent the previous decade. Altogether, the proportion of slaves in South Carolina's total population increased from 42 to 47 percent between 1790 and 1810.11 These figures demonstrate that during the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth, white South Carolinians linked the expansion and growth of slavery to their continued economic and political prosperity.

Despite the optimism over the unprecedented economic opportunities, whites in post-war Charleston became increasingly anxious about the future of slavery for a number of reasons. Peter Kolchin has written that "the Revolution posed the biggest challenge the slave regime would face until the outbreak of the Civil War." The Revolution decreased white authority while increasing black autonomy. It pushed slaveowners to an

I\*These figures are taken from United States Bureau of the Census, Hands of Families Attle First Federal Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790. South Carolina Attle First Federal Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790. South Carolina (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1908), 8-9; Return of the Whole Number OFFenosa Within the Several Districts of the United States. A Providing For the Second Census or Finnmentation of the Inhabitants of the United States. Passed Echnaru Hot tensus—sighth. Bloog (Washington DC, 1802) (hereafter icited as Second Federal Census); Agarcaste Amount of Each Description of Persons Within the United States of America, and the Certificities Theoretic Arreade Vito Artsut Emmention Make Association to Law, in the Year 1810 (Washington DC, 1811) (hereafter cited as Georgetown districts for 1790, place Colonton district for 190) and States (Williamsburgh, and Horry for 1810. The remainder in each census made up the backcountry.

<sup>15</sup> Kolchin, American Slavery, 70.

even greater defense of slavery while at the same time increasing their anxiety over the survival of the institution. Revolutionary ideology, rising abolitionism, and subsequent events in France and Santo Domingo combined to raise white levels of anxiety to a fever pitch. If Charleston became more economically prosperous in the 1790s through agricultural expansion, internal improvements, and the growth of banking, it also turned more defensive, increasingly anxious over the supposed threats to the stability and future of slavery posed by external ideas and people. Before the Revolution, black autonomy in Charleston-slaves hiring their own time, working, worshiping, drinking, socializing, and congregating in large numbers-seemed more annoying to whites than threatening. By the mid-1790s, after the uprising in Santo Domingo, the emancipation of all French slaves, and the haunting memories of their own Revolution. Charlestonians increasingly viewed their slaves as potential incendiaries whom they could neither trust nor live without. Caught on the horns of this enormous dilemma. Charleston slowly began closing itself off ideologically from the rest of the world, even as it optimistically embraced the commercial opportunities of the American Revolution. But the tension inherent in this dichotomy--encouraging world-wide trade while simultaneously fearing that external beliefs and people endangered the very fabric of Southern society-could not be contained forever. The cosmopolitan and liberal commitment to strong commercial ties with the North and the outside world would increasingly find itself fighting for survival in an atmosphere of paranoia, suspicion, and fear. One nervous planter warned in 1793, "recollect the fate of Santo Domingo-I need not speak plainer. Remember that

self-preservation is the first law of nature. "ME Charleston would eventually begin to seal itself off from the "contamination" of dangerous and threatening ideologies. The seeds of what the South would become in the nineteenth century took deep root in Charleston in the last years of the eighteenth, and in the South no less than the North "the cities predicted the future."

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Though most South Carolinians displayed a renewed and strengthened commitment to slavery and the slave trade in the aftermath of war, Revolutionary ideology had indeed changed some attitudes towards the institution. Abolitionist sentiment never took firm hold in the South's largest city, but still the manumission rate in Charleston in the 1780s nearly doubled that of the previous decade. <sup>18</sup> One historian places the total number of slaves freed in South Carolina between 1783 and 1800 at 742. <sup>18</sup> Charleston's free black population numbered 586 in 1790 (7.1 percent of the city's black

<sup>16</sup>City Gazette & Daily Advertiser, September 17, 1793.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution, Abr. ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), ix.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>There were 118 manumissions in Charleston in the 1780s as compared to 61 in the 1770s, 29 in the 1796s, and 14 in the 1796s. Morey "Black Society in the Chesspeake," 116. Individual manumissions can be found scattered throughout the Miscellaneous Records, Main Series, 1731-1985, 123 vols, Recorded Instruments, Records of the Secretary of State, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia (hereafter cited as SCDAH).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Larry Darnell Watson, "The Quest For Order: Enforcing Slave Codes in Revolutionary South Carolina, 1760-1800," Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1980, 164. Watson estimates the total number of manumissions between 1760 and 1800 to be 1,081-183 before the war, 150 during the war, and 742 after the war.

population), 951 in 1800 (7.7 percent), and 1,472 in 1810 (11.2 percent). For the state as a whole the numbers were much lower. In 1810, South Carolina's free blacks comprised only 2.3 percent of the total black population. By comparison, over 20 percent of Maryland blacks had gained freedom by 1810, while free blacks constituted 7 percent of Virginia's population in the same year. The free black population in the Chesapeake grew enormously in the post-war years. Indeed, free blacks formed a majority of Baltimore's 'Black population by 1810 <sup>21</sup>

White Charlestonians' worried that the city's free black population might exercise a dangerous influence among the city's slaves far in excess of their small numbers. Charleston authorities thus attempted to restrict the activities of the free black community as best they could. A 1783 law, renewed three years later, required all free blacks in Charleston to distinguish themselves by wearing badges, to purchase a license to practice certain trades, and forced them to pay an annual poll tax of four shillings, nine pence.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Heads of Families at the First Census, South Carolina, 8-9; Second and Third Federal Censuses.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>The numbers for free blacks in the Chesapeake are found in Richard S. Dunn, "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 177-618 (iv)" in Berlin and Hofman, Slaxery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, 62, 75. For the growth of the free black population in the upper South, see T. Stephen Whitman, The <u>Price of Freedom; Slavery and Manumission in Bultimore and Early Manual Maryland (Chesipton NY; University)</u> Press of Kentucky, 1997), Christopher Phillips, <u>Freedom's Port: The Africian American Community of Bultimore</u>, 1790-1860 (Urbana Itz. University) of Illinois Press 1979, and Ina Berlin, Slaves Without Massers: The Free Negro in the Antehellum South (New York: Partheon Books, 1974).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Watson, "Quest for Order," 185-186; Lark Emerson Adams, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, 1785-1786, The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: L'iniversity of South Carolina Press, 1979), 462. The tax was increased in 1792 to two dollars after the Santo Domingo insurrection.

The corporation thus hoped to restrict free black movement in the city, particularly in their association with slaves, while also preventing open competition with Charleston's white artisans. City fathers designed the tax in part to encourage free blacks to leave town altogether. These stringent measures met with only modest success. Charlestonians complained throughout this period of "the licentiousness of the negroes of this town." To many blacks—both free and slave—patronized the city's abundant dram shops, congregated unlawfully, sold merchandise illegally and gambled on city streets and wharves. City mechanics protested periodically about "jobbing Negro tradesmen" who undersold white craftsmen. Charleston coopers formed the Society of Master Coopers in 1793 primarily to present a united economic front against black competition.

Despite these ubiquitous problems and the presence of the largest black population of any city on mainland North America, some Charlestonians nevertheless stepped forward in the post-war years to publicly oppose slavery and the slave trade. This opposition manifested itself primarily in the local press, though the authors causiously hid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Governor's Message, August 6, 1783, in Theodora J. Thompson, ed., <u>Journals of the</u> <u>House of Representatives</u>. <u>1783-1784</u>. The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 332.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>See Presentment of the Charleston Grand Jury, February 16, 1790, September 21, 1792, January sessions, 1793, 1798, Grand Jury Presentments, 1783-1859, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Petition of Bricklayers and Carpenters of Charleston, February 21, 1783; Petition of the Society of Master Coopers of Charleston, December 10, 1793, Petitions, 1782-1883, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH.

behind pseudonyms. <sup>26</sup> In fact, the Charleston newspapers remained remarkably open to anti-slavery rhetoric until 1791, when the slave revolt in Santo Domingo (Haiti) poisoned the intellectual atmosphere and closed off local avenues of debate. In 1783 "Another Patriot" expressed outrage over the sight of the American flag flying "in every yard where the unfortunate Africans are penned for sale." War veterans, he argued, "must burn with indignation at such an affront offered to it." Two years later another writer condemned the slave trade as "shocking to humanity, cruel, wicked, and diabolical." "Sternic," in another piece, attacked slavery itself as "still a bitter draught, and though thousands in all ages have been made to drink of it," it remained contemptible. "Other writers chose to oppose slavery through poetry." There is no clear proof of how the majority of Charlestonians reacted to these essays. Most probably found such sentiment offensive and perhaps dangerous if consumed by city slaves, but most no doubt dismissed such polemics as the sporadic, singular ravings of an insignificant minority. The reaction would have been much different had such ideas been promulgated by a group of locally

 $<sup>^{26}\</sup>mathrm{This}$  was a common practice in eighteenth-century newspapers, of course, and was not confined to essays on slavery.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser, October 18, 1783.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>South Carolina Gazette and Public Advertiser, April 13, 1785.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>South Carolina State Gazette, September 4, 1786, quoted in Watson, "Quest For Order," 153-154.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>South Carolina State Gazette, September 7, 1786, January 6, 1791, quoted in Ibid., 153-154.

organized abolitionists. No such society existed, of course, though some famous Charlestonians agreed privately with these anonymous essayists.

Henry Laurens proved to be an early and perhaps the most famous convert to abolitionism. Prominent in the Revolutionary movement, Laurens denounced slavery as early as 1776 and declared his intentions to free his slaves. In a now-famous letter to his son, Laurens said he would not ask God to protect his liberty while he continued to enslave "thousands who are as well entitled to freedom." Laurens acknowledged that "great powers oppose me" and that his challenge to time-honored customs and prejudices would "appear to many as a promoter not only of strange but of dangerous doctrines." Laurens' son John at least agreed with him. "We have sunk the Africans and their descendants below the standard of humanity." he replied to his father, "and almost rendered them incapable of that blessing which equal Heaven bestowed upon us all." The condered them incapable of that blessing which equal Heaven bestowed upon us all the produced that the standard of practice, but the South Carolina legislature had other to put his idealistic beliefs into practice, but the South Carolina legislature had other ideas." It repeatedly and overwhelmingly rejected his proposal to raise a regiment of ideas."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Henry Laurens to John Laurens, August 14, 1776, in Philip M. Hamner et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, 14 vols, to date (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 11:224-225. See also Gregory D. Massey, "The Limits of Antislavery Thought in the Revolutionary Lower South: John Laurens and Henry Laurens," Journal of Southern Bistory 63 (August 1997): 495-530.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>John Laurens to Henry Laurens, October 26, 1776, Ibid., 11:276-277.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>For John Laurens' attempts to arm slaves, see chapter three, pp. 153-156, and Henry Laurens to John Laurens, January 28, 1778, John Laurens to Henry Laurens, February 2, 1778, Ibid., 12:367-369, 390-393; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, January 22, 1778, February 6, 1778, September 21, 1779, John Laurens to Henry Laurens, February 17, 1779, March 10, 1779, in "Letters from Henry Laurens to His Son John, 1777-1780,"

freed slaves. "I was out-voted," John Laurens complained to his friend Alexander
Hamilton, "having only reason on my side, and being opposed by a triple-headed monster
of avarice, prejudice, and pusillanimity in our assemblies." After the war his father
could claim that "some of my negroes to whom I have offered freedom have declined the
bounty, they will live with me, to some of them I already allow wages, to all of them
every proper indulgence." He remained sufficiently optimistic in 1785 to believe that
"slavery in the United States, so far as Virginia southward is either totally abolished or
dwindling. I think I see the rising gradations to unlimited freedom and view the prospect
with pleasure." He predicted a "direful struggle" if Southerners did not abolish slavery
"by wise and progressive measures." Laurens opposed the continuation of the slavetrade, but does not appear to have spoken our publicly against the institution itself. On at
least one occasion Laurens passed along an abolitionist pamphlet he had received from a
friend to fellow Carolinians John Faucheraud Grimke and Ralph Izard, two staunch

South Carolina Historical Magazine 6 (April, October 1905): 47-48, 50-51, 137-139, 149-150; Aedanus Burke to Arthur Middleton, January 25, 1782, in Joseph W. Barnwell, ed., "Correspondence of Hon. Arthur Middleton," South Carolina Historical Magazine 26 (October 1925): 192, 194.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>John Laurens to Alexander Hamilton, July 1782, in Harold C. Syrett, ed., <u>The Papers of Alexander Hamilton</u>, 26 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1979), 3:121.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>Henry Laurens to Alexander Hamilton, April 19, 1785, William Gilmore Simms Collection of Henry Laurens Papers, Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts, microfilm, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia [hereafter cited as Kendall Collection].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Henry Laurens to the Rev. Dr. [Richard] Price, February 1, 1785, Laurens to Alexander Hamilton, April 19, 1785, Laurens to James Bourdieu, May 6, 1785, Kendall Collection.

supporters of slavery. Grimke apparently felt highly insulted.<sup>27</sup> Though Laurens despaired that "he has the whole country against him," <sup>28</sup> He still owned many slaves at his death. His ideas ultimately proved to be more radical than his actions. <sup>29</sup>

David Ramsay was another prominent Charlestonian who opposed slavery. A Pennsylvania native and physician, Ramsay relocated to Charleston in 1773 and brought a strong dose of abolitionism with him.<sup>40</sup> As he became involved in local and national politics, however, Ramsay found his views unpopular in his adopted home and thought it increasingly politically expedient to keep his views to himself. A public declaration against slavery, he said, would bring only "calumny and public odium" without doing the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Richard Price to Thomas Jefferson, July 2, 1785, in Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., <u>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson</u>, 26 vols. to date (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 8:258-259.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>Richard Price to Thomas Jefferson, October 24, 1785, Ibid., 8:668.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Will of Henry Laurens, WPA Transcripte 24 (1786-1793):1152-1158, South Carolina (WPA) Will Transcripts, Wills of Chelsotho Coutty, mirrofflun SCDAH; Columbia, originals in Charleston Coutty Octobrouse. For two recent accounts of Laurens' relationship with his slaves, see Robert A. Olvell, "A Reckoting of Accounts': Patriarchy, Market Relations, and Control on Henry Lauren's Lowcountry Plantations, 1762-1785; "in Larry F. Induson Ir., ed., Working Toward Freedom; Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South (Rochester University of Rochester Press, 1994), 33-52; Philip D. Morgan, "Three Planters and Their Slaves: Ferspectives on Slavey in Virginia, South Carolina, and Afsicals, 1 Seet and Jamaics, 1750-1790; "in Winthrop D. Jordan and Shela I. Skemp, eds., Rage and Family in the Colonial South (Backson MS: University Press of Mississipp), 1897, 54-68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>See Arthur H. Shaffer, <u>To Be An American: David Ramsay and the Making of the American Consciousness</u> (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 165-187.

least good. 

Though he would later deny it, Ramsay told his friend Dr. Benjamin Rush privately that he longed for total abolition of both slavery and the slave trade. 

Nevertheless, Charlestonians evidently knew of Ramsay's views. When he ran for Congress in the first Federal elections in 1788, Ramsay opposed William Loughton Smith, a well-placed Charleston lawyer and Goose Creek planter. In Goose Creek Smith was allied with Ralph Izard, an extremely powerful and wealthy planter who was not only Smith's neighbor but his father-in-law as well. 

When Ramsay unwisely questioned Smith's eligibility to meet the Constitution's residency requirement, Smith and Izard lashed out at Ramsay's most vulnerable weakness. 

Wit is very well known that he is principled against slavery, "Smith charged, and he blasted Ramsay for not promising to vehemently defend the institution against Federal encroachments in Congress. Northern men must be taught "that without slavery, this district must be abandoned and rendered a mere wilderness; that the slaves of this country are well treated, and live more happy than

the white peasantry in Europe," Smith and Izard dismissed Ramsay as a Northern man

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, August 22, 1783, in Robert L. Brunhouse, ed., "David Ramsay, 1749-1815: Selections From His Writings," <u>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</u> 55, Part 4 (1965): 76.

<sup>42</sup>Ramsay to Rush, January 31, 1785, Ibid., 87.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>George C. Rogers Jr., <u>Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758-1812)</u> (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1962), 112-134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>Smith had been traveling and studying in England from 1770 to 1783, and Ramsay charged that he therefore had not been in the country long enough to qualify for election as a United States citizen under the terms of the Constitution. See <u>Charleston Morning Post & Daily Advertiser</u>, November 22, 1788; Shaffer, To Be An American, 181-184.

born and bred with principles directly opposed to Charleston's. When Ramsay denied that he had ever supported emancipation, Smith sneered that "it is idle for him to contradict what is so universally known, and I am sure I would never trust a man to do my business whose inclination it was to injure me."

Ramsay covered his tracks as best he could, falsely maintaining "that I never approved of the emancipation of the Negroes of this country." To do so, he claimed, would be ruinous for both black and white. Charleston voters, however, evidently believed Smith, choosing the native lawyer over the transplanted abolitionist by a better than two-to-one margin. "A Ramsay told a friend that he lost the election because he was a Northern man, and "such is the temper of our people here that it is unopoular to be unfriendly to the further importation of slaves." Though the loss was a bitter one, he learned his lesson well. Ramsay never again opposed slavery publicly and only rarely in private."

Despite Ramsays's assertion, many Carolinians opposed the slave trade during the 1780s, though their objections revolved around economic rather than moral issues.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>Merril Jensen and Robert A. Becker, eds., <u>The Documentary History of the First Federal Elections</u>, 1788-1790, 4 vols. (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976-1992), 1:180-181. Smith's attack was published in the <u>State Gazette of South Carolina</u>, November 24, 1788, and he also published another attack as <u>A Dose for the Doctor (Charleston</u>, 1788).

<sup>45</sup> State Gazette of South Carolina, December 1, 1788. In Charleston, Smith received 349 votes (35 percent), Alexander Gillon 169 (25 percent), Ramsay 146 (22 percent). In the surrounding lowcountry parishes that made up Charleston District, he fared even worse, receiving only 45 of 513 (9 percent) votes cast.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>Shaffer, To Be An American, 187.

Planter debt rose enormously in the post-war years due to record numbers of slave importations, and in many minds lowcountry economic recovery became linked with abolishing the slave trade. Carolinians thus distinguished between opposition to the slave trade and condemnation of slavery itself. Lowcountry planters also shrewdly recognized that cutting off the supply of foreign slaves would make domestic ones more valuable. Backcountry farmers opposed the move, fearing that fewer slaves would mean rising costs while limiting economic opportunity to the wealthy coastal elite. Upcountry planters demanded that the trade remain open so that they too might capitalize equally upon increased post-war opportunities for agricultural production and expansion. A combination of forces--backcountry opposition, the expansion of short- and long-staple cotton production, and the shift to tidal rice cultivation in the lowcountry--blocked the first efforts to end foreign importation. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney argued that "this country was not capable of being cultivated by white men . . . was it not well understood that no planter could cultivate his land without slaves?"48 A bill to prohibit the trade lost by four votes in 1785.49 The vote disappointed but did not discourage slave trade opponents like Ramsay. Their continued efforts paid off two years later when the legislature voted--by a margin of three--to end the slave trade for two years 50 Charleston

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Charleston Evening Gazette. October 1, 1785, quoted in S.R. Matchett, "'Unanimity, Order and Regularity': The Political Culture of South Carolina in the Era of the Revolution," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sydney, 1980, 34.

Shaffer, To Be an American, 171.

Michael E. Stevens, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1787-1788</u>, The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 232-233; Rogers, <u>Evolution of a Federalist</u>, 161; Patrick Stone Brady, "The Slave

favored the ban by a vote of 13-2, while the remainder of the lowcountry approved 26-19. The backcountry opposed the bill 33-18. The measure did not represent a lessened commitment to slavery in South Carolina. Thomas Jefferson misread the vote, heartly congratulating his friend Edward Rutledge for abolishing the trade. "The abomination must have an end," he wrote, "and there is a superior bench reserved in heaven for those who hasten it." As Jefferson and others would learn, economics rather than altered opinions had halted the trade, and an increasingly paranoid fear of slave revolts would keep it closed for the next sixteen years.

Though South Carolinians might abolish the slave trade for a number of years, they were not prepared to have others tell them what to do with regard to their slaves. Many Charlestonians observed with mounting anxiety a growing dislike for slavery in much of the rest of the country in the years after the war. As early as 1782, during the debate in the South Carolina legislature over arming slaves, Aedanus Burke warned that "the Northern people regard the condition in which we hold our slaves in a light different from us. I am much deceived indeed, if they do not secretly with for a general emancination." One prominent Philadelphian told him that "our country would be a fine

Trade and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1787-1808," <u>Journal of Southern History</u> 38 (November 1972): 608.

<sup>51</sup> Journals of the House of Representatives, 1787-1788, 232-233.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Edward Rutledge, July 14, 1787, <u>Papers of Thomas Jefferson</u>, 11:589.

one if our whites and blacks inter-married—the breed would be a hardy excellent race."

Indeed, most Northern states abolished slavery altogether in the years after the war.

Every northern state, without exception, either ended slavery outright or began the process, beginning in 1777, when Vermon's new constitution prohibited slavery in that state, and continued until New Jersey passed the last gradual emancipation law in 1804. So On the national level, Congress banned slavery from the Northwest Territory (the future states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin) in 1787, while a similar effort authored by Thomas Jefferson to ban slavery in the southwest territory (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi) failed by only one vote. So South Carolinians watched uneasily as slavery came increasingly under siege even in their own region.

Virginia banned the further importation of slaves in 1778 and after the war removed many.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>Aedanus Burke to Arthur Middleton, January 25, 1782, in Barnwell, ed., "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," 194.

For emancipation in the North, see especialty Graham Russell Hodges, Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North, African Americans in Monomoth County, New Heree, 1665-1865 (Madison W: Madison House, 1997); George A. Levesque, Black Boston, African American Life and Culture in Urban America, 1750-1869 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); Shane White, Semewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York (City, 1770-1810 (Athen GA: Cluriversity of Gorgia Press, 1991); Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Sunderland, Ereedom By Degrees: Emancipation and Its Aftermath in Pennstyvania (New York, 1990); Gary B. Nash, Forgiate Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), Arthur Zürlersmit, The First Emmanipation: The Adoltion of Slavery in the North (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Lone F. Litwack, York of Slavery: The North Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

<sup>55</sup> Kolchin, American Slavery, 77-78.

of the restrictions on the manumission of slaves. Manyland entertained the idea of abolishing slavery altogether but like Virginia simply eased manumission laws while halting the slave trade in 1783. Delaware followed suit. Consequently, the free black population swelled in the Chesapeake in the years after the war. 77

Anxiety turned to outright anger, however, at the thought of the national government tampering with slavery where it already existed. South Carolinians might abolish the slave trade themselves, but they were certain that no one else had the right to do it for them. In the debate over the ratification of the United States Constitution, Rawlins Lowndes objected to the Federal government having the power to abolish the slave trade permanently in 1808 and denounced any and all Northern interference with regard to slavery. South Carolina without slaves, he said, "would degenerate into one of the most contemptible [states] in the Union." Lowndes echoed Charles Cotesworth Pinckney's objections of two years earlier, arguing that while one acre of swampland remained in South Carolina whites should have unlimited access to slaves. Northern objections to the slave trade troubled Lowndes most of all. "Negroes were our wealth, our only natural resource," he maintained, "yet behold how our kind friends in the north were determined soon to tie up our hands, and drain us of what we had!" "Charles

<sup>56</sup>Private manumissions had been illegal in Virginia from 1723 to 1782. Kolchin, American Slavery, 77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>Brady, "Slave Trade and Sectionalism," 602n; John Richard Alden, <u>The South In the Revolution</u>, 1763-1789 (Baton Rouge LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 335, 344-348.

<sup>58</sup> Debates Which Arose in the House of Representatives of South Carolina, On the Constitution Framed for the United States, By a Convention of Delegates Assembled at

Cotesworth Pinckney, a participant in the original debate over the slave trade in the 
Philadelphia convention, responded that Lower South delegates had done all they could to 
protect slavery. Virginia's opposition to the slave trade combined with the "religious and 
political prejudices of the Eastern and Middle States" had forced the Lower South's hand. 
Though South Carolina without slaves would become a "desert waste," it was too weak to 
survive outside the Union. Concessions therefore had to be made."

No Southerners, however, thought the federal government had a right to tamper with slavery itself. South Carolinians might make concessions over the slave trade in order to ensure the survival of the Union, but they drew a line in the sand over any further interference. Federal legislation concerning slavery in the territories was one thing: attempting to end slavery in the existing states was something else entirely. In February 1790, as the new government struggled to establish its authority, three Quaker petitions asking Congress to abolish slavery and the slave trade ignited a firestorm of controversy and raised South Carolina tempers to a fever pitch. Thomas Fitzsimons of Pennsylvania introduced a petition from Quaker groups in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, while John Lawrence introduced a similar petition from New York Quakers. The next day the Congress received a petition, signed by Benjamin Franklin, from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, which

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>Philadelphia</u> (Charleston: City Gazette, 1788), 16; Carl J. Vipperman, <u>The Rise of Rawlins Lowndes</u>, <u>1721-1800</u> (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1978), 247.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup>Marvin R. Zahniser, <u>Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father</u> (Chapel Hill North Carolina Press, 1967), 87-96; Vipperman, <u>Rise of Rawlins</u> Lowndes, 249-250.

threatened "to use all justifiable endeavors to loosen the bands of slavery, and promote a general enjoyment of the blessings of freedom."60 The South Carolina delegation exploded in outraged protest. Charleston congressman William Loughton Smith and his colleague Aedanus Burke blasted the Quakers (several of whom were sitting in the gallery) for practically inciting a bloody insurrection and asked that the petitions be thrown out altogether since the request was so clearly unconstitutional. Their Virginia colleague James Madison urged the Carolinians to sit down and remain quiet; if ignored, he said, the petitions would disappear. The louder South Carolina protested, the more important they became.<sup>61</sup> But Burke could not control his temper. He had long harbored suspicions about Northern attitudes toward slavery, and he urged that Southerners "not be threatened and their property endangered to please people who would be unaffected by the consequences." Any Congressional effort to interfere with slavery, he warned "would sound an alarm and blow the trumpet of sedition in the Southern states." 62 Despite strong Southern protests, Congress referred the netitions to a committee, and the debate began in earnest.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>John C. Meleney, The Public Life of Aedanus Burke, Revolutionary Republican in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina (columbia SC: University of South Carolina Fersis, 1989), 187. For the Quakers and their opposition to slavery, see Jean R. Sunderland, Omakers and Slavery: A Divided Sprint (Princeton NI: Princeton University Press, 1985), David Brino Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Column (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 291-332; Davis, Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 213-254; Kolchin, American Slavery: 67-68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup>Meleney, Public Life of Aedanus Burke, 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup>United States Congress, The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States, 1789-1824, 42 vols. (Washington DC, 1834-1856), 2:1186, 1199 (hereafter referred to as Annals of Congress).

South Carolina's attack on the Ouaker petitions in the Congressional debates of 1790 rehearsed practically every defense of slavery that Southerners would make in the nineteenth century. Aedanus Burke, William Loughton Smith, and Thomas Tudor Tucker, though representing diverse and contentious regions within South Carolina 63 united to defend slavery, not as a necessary evil which needed apology but as a humane and uplifting institution.64 If emancipated, Smith charged, slaves would either be reduced to starvation or crime.65 But the three congressmen directed their most heated invective against Federal interference with slavery and the Quakers themselves. Smith denounced the netitions as an "attack upon the palladium of the property of our country," and he warned his colleagues that "there is no point on which we are more jealous and suspicious than on a business with which [we] think the government has nothing to do 1966 South Carolinians, he said, considered the subject closed after adjournment of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. The Union resembled a marriage, each side compromising and accepting the other's faults: "The Northern States adopted us with our slaves, and we adopted them with their Quakers."67 Furthermore, the marriage was a nolitical rather than a moral union, "and I don't think my constituents want to learn

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup>Burke represented Beaufort and Orangeburgh District, Smith represented Charleston District, and Tucker sat for Ninety-Six. Rogers, <u>Evolution of a Federalist</u>, 167.

<sup>64</sup>See especially Burke's comments on March 17, 1790. <u>Annals of Congress</u>, 2:1452-1453.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 2:1453-1464.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 2:1201-1202.

<sup>67</sup> Meleney, Aedanus Burke, 190.

morals from the [Quakers]." Acadamus Burke likewise unleashed a torrent of abuse on the Quakers, among other things denying they were "friends of freedom" and charging them with various acts of treason during the Revolutionary War. At that point Burke was called to order "and a warm altercation ensued." Meanwhile Thomas Tudor Tucker asked incredulously if the Quakers really expected Carolinians to free their slaves. If so they had miscalculated badly. "This would never be submitted to by the Southern states," he prophesied ominously, "without a civil war."

South Carolina won the point after two duss of endless arguing succeeded in wearing Congress down and "trimming the Quakers in the gallery pretty soundly." 
Smith assured his friend and fellow Charleston lawyer Edward Rutdedge that further debate was unlikely, because the South Carolinians had made it clear that they would violently oppose even the slightest interference with "our Negro property." At least one leading Quaker thought that a mano a mano encounter with Smith might do more good. A Mr. Mifflin, "a great fellow near seven foot high," cornered Smith at his Philadelphia lodgings and harangued him for two hours in his own parlor. After fruitless efforts trying "to convert each other in vain," Smith suggested the Quaker ty his luck with his father-

<sup>68</sup> Annals of Congress, 2:1202.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 2:1452-1453.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup>Ibid., 2:1198.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup>William Loughton Smith to Edward Rutledge, February 13, February 28, 1790, in George C. Rogers Jr., ed., "The Letters of William Loughton Smith to Edward Rutledge, June 6, 1789 to April 28, 1794," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 69 (April 1968): 104, 108-109.

in-law, South Carolina Senator Ralph Izard, who owned over 550 slaves in 1790.72 Mifflin eagerly agreed and went to see Izard. When Smith arrived an hour later he found the wealthy rice planter and the Ouaker "in close debate attacking each other with texts of scripture." When fellow South Carolina Senator Pierce Butler joined the fray, the outnumbered Quaker sought to reinforce his numbers by inviting all three Carolinians to dinner with his "Society," but they declined.73 The Quaker influence in Philadelphia played no small role in South Carolina's zealous endorsement of a more Southern national capital. Senator William McClay of the Keystone state sniffed that both Izard and Butler "have a most settled antipathy to Pennsylvania owing to the doctrines patronized in that state on the subject of slavery. Pride makes fools of them, or rather completes what nature began."74 Aedanus Burke swore that "placing the government in a settlement of Ouakers" was the equivalent of South Carolina pitching its tent under a tree with a hornet's nest.75 William Loughton Smith agreed, "The Ouakers wish us at the Devil," he told a friend, "I need not tell you where I wish them."76 Though Southerners

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>Izard owned 435 slaves in St. George's Parish, 14 in St. Andrew's Parish, 105 at his home plantation, "The Elms," in St. James Goose Creek, and 10 in Charleston, for a total of 564. Heads of Families at the First Census. South Carolina. 33-34. 37. 44.

<sup>73</sup> See Smith's account of this meeting in William Loughton Smith to Edward Rutledge, February 28, 1790, "Letters of William Loughton Smith to Edward Rutledge," 108-109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup>Quoted in Malcolm Bell Jr., Major Butler's Legacy; Five Generations of a <u>Slaveholding Family</u> (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 85.

<sup>75</sup> Meleney, Aedanus Burke, 200.

<sup>75</sup>William Smith to "My Dear Sir," November 24, 1790, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Series I, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

triumphed over the issue of Congress' authority to interfere with slavery in the states, Carolinians emerged from the debate more anxious than ever over the growing necessity to defend slavery in the face of external aggression. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney spoke for many when he told congressman Thomas Sumter that though he had hitherto supported the new Federal government, "I have no idea of them intermeddling with our negroes. That is altogether a matter of domestic regulation. The great art of government is not to govern too much.""

The slave revolt on the French West Indian island of Santo Domingo in 1791 permanently altered Charleston's intellectual climate. It became for many South Carolinians the equivalent of a "firebell in the night." Though Northern abolitionists might be cause for alarm, they paled in significance when compared to the threat posed by the bloody French insurrection. However open and cosmopolitan Charleston may have been in the colonial em and even through the immediate post-war years, the character of the city changed perceptibly in the 1790s after Santo Domingo. Charleston whites, already anxious over the continuing attacks upon slavery in their own country, became convinced by Santo Domingo that a similar volcano stirred beneath them and that only extraordinary measures could prevent an analogous exclusion. After 1791 white

<sup>&</sup>quot;Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to "Dear General," March 31, 1790, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>The first insurrection in Santo Domingo occurred on August 22, 1791. The <u>State Gazette of South Carolina</u> and the <u>City Gazette and Daily Advertiser</u> both reported the event on September 15, 1791.

<sup>79</sup>This was the phrase Jefferson used to describe the Missouri controversy of 1820.

Charlestonians began constructing an intellectual blockade against any influence—whether external or internal—that might ignite the fuse of insurrection. 

Santo Domingo became the lens through which whites viewed every facet of slavery and black life in Charleston. In white minds all free blacks—especially those from the West Indies—were potential incendiaries who should be driven from the state. Lawmakers banned all West Indian slaves for fear that they especially might be carriers of the dreaded virus of insurrection. Nervous officials outlawed all large gatherings of city slaves. 

Blacks gathering to worship or socialize, even in small numbers, became non grata. 

Newspapers stopped printing anti-slavery letters, while any and all abolitionist literature became particularly anathematized. One writer even proposed that the local press top publishing any news of Santo Domingo less clever slaves "explain to the more ignorant of their class the full force of this dangerous doctrine—what then must be the effect of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>The phrase "intellectual blockade" is borrowed from Alfred N. Hunt, <u>Haiti's Induses on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean</u> (Baton Rouge LA: Louisians State University Press, 1988), 114.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Michael E. Stevens, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1791</u>, The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 203.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Presentment of the Charleston Grand Jury, February 16, 1790, Grand Jury Presentments, Charleston District, Report of the Committee on the Cours of Justice, 1791, Committee Reports; Presentment of the Grand Jury for the District of Charleston, September 21, 1792, Grand Jury Presentment; Presentment of the Grand Jury Charleston District, 1798, Grand Jury Presentments, 1783-1859, all in Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH.

this?<sup>2983</sup> Public opinion and fear banished all forms of dissent and debate, and slowly but surely during the 1790s Charleston became encircled by the walls of paranoia.

South Carolinians, like most Americans, initially welcomed and supported the first news of the French Revolution in 1789. America's great ally of the Revolution seemed to be throwing off the shackles of royal despotism and tyranny in favor of republicanism, and South Carolinians gave the movement their blessing. Even after the French slaves in Santo Domingo rose in revolt in August 1791, many in South Carolina did not originally link the event to the ideology of the French Revolution. <sup>14</sup> Democratic-Republican societies flourished in South Carolina until late 1793, <sup>16</sup> and prominent Charlestonians like Charles Cotesworth Pinckney continued to publicly endorse the

El"Rusticus" quoted in Watson, "Quest for Order," 150.

<sup>\*</sup>See George D. Terry, "A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Domingue Upon South Carolina," M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1975, 2-3; Terry, "South Carolina's First Negro Seamen Acts, 1793-1803," Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 1980, 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>There were at least five societies in South Carolina in the 1790s. The Republican Society of South Carolina, 1793, the Democratic Society of Fincheny District, 1793, the Madisonian Society of Greenville, 1794, the Franklin or Republican Society of Surface, 1794, the Franklin or Republican Society of Sender Society of Statholomew's Parish, 1795, See Republican Society of South Carolina Society of South Society Control Sender Society of South Society Soc

Revolution. Enthusiasm, however, turned to outright horror when the French abolished slavery throughout their empire in 1793. White Santo Domingan refugees poured into Charlesson that same year after Cape Francois fell in mid-1793 and white Charlestonians began to witness firsthand the realities of service insurrection. Some members of Charleston's Federalist elite, like Ralph Izard and William Loughton Smith, had been suspicious from the start. Izard and Smith had fought Northern abolitionists in Congress, and words like liberté and egalité frightened them. "South Carolina would be one of the first victims to the principles contained in the Rights of Man," Izard warned, because he realized that such notions could be applied "without distinction, to persons of all colors."

Santo Domingo, the largest colony in the West Indies in 1789, contained a population more than 92 percent black, including 452,000 slaves. The Santo Domingo legislature pleaded with South Carolina Governor Charles Pinckney for military assistance in 1791. Pinckney, though restrained by the Constitution from interfering in foreign policy, clearly thought the matter of great concern to South Carolina. He passed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup>Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to Thomas Pinckney, January 7, 1793, in Pinckney Family Papers, Library of Congress, cited in Frances Leigh Williams Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup>See Thomas O. Ott, <u>The Haitian Revolution</u>, <u>1789-1804</u> (Knoxville TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 47-75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Ralph Izard to Thomas Pinckney, August 12, 1793, quoted in Lisle A. Rose, <u>Prologue to Democraey: The Federalists in the South, 1789-1800</u> (Lexington KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1968), 109-110.

<sup>\*</sup>Donald R. Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806," <u>Journal of the Early Republic</u> 2 (Winter 1982): 362.

the request on to President Washington and warned that an insurrection on the island could prove fatal for the Southern states. In the meantime, Pinckney cautioned that South Carolina's best defense was a good offense: the state should institute "strict and unceasing" slave patrols and militia drill. No Charlestonians at first welcomed and sympathized with the "very genteel but unfortunate" white refugees who poured into the port from Santo Domingo beginning in 1792. It Charlestonians supplied temporary housing and contributed over \$12,000 in relief funds to the refugees, and the French consul in Charleston estimated that over 600 Santo Domingans lived in the city by 1796. Namy of these fugitives brought their slaves with them, however, and after the French abolished slavery in 1793 the mood in Charleston began to sour. Hospitally was one thing; inviting and welcoming one's own destruction was something else again. "From the moment we admitted the St. Domingo negrees into our county," one native warned, "security from that source became daily preservious."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>Charles Pinckney to Colonel Vanderhorst, May 28, 1792, Charles Pinckney Papers, South Caroliniana Library. See also Pinckney's message to the legislature in <u>Journals of</u> the House of Representatives, 1791, 319.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Chales Cotesworth Pinckney to Thomas Pinckney, August 25, 1792, Cratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, cited in Frances Leigh Williams Papers, South Carolina Historical Society. See also William Read to Jacob Read, August 25, 1793: "The frequent arrivals of the miserable fugitives from St. Domingo excites charriy and sympathetic lyt from all otders." Quoted in Terry, "Fins Negro Seaman Acts," 80.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>Hunt, Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America, 43, 107. See also Resolution Directing that the Vendue Taxes of the City of Charleston for 1794 be Appropriated for the Relief of Refugees from Santo Domingo, December 21, 1794, Resolutions, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH.

<sup>93</sup>Terry, "First Negro Seaman Acts," 80.

By late 1793 South Carolina became inundated with numors of impending slave revolts. Virginia authorities warned in October of a conspiracy between slaves in that state and South Carolina. An unknown instigator from the West Indies would begin the uprising by arming slaves in Charleston and then firing the town. Panic gave way to hysteria when two shiploads of black and white Santo Domingans arrived in Charleston just days before the supposed revolt, and terrified whites called a mass meeting to demand that the governor turn the ships away and ban any further admittance of Haitian free blacks or slaves.<sup>94</sup> The governor acquiesced, ordering all free blacks who had arrived within the previous year out of South Carolina within ten days.95 Rumors nevertheless reached Philadelphia that the revolt had succeeded and Senator Pierce Butler implored the state legislature to ban all West Indian blacks--and for good measure those from the North and Virginia as well-before something worse happened. Virginia's blacks, he said, were "strongly tinetured," while those in Philadelphia "are more luxurious and more insolent than any person who has not witnessed it can credit."96 Just two months later Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson somewhat skeptically advised Governor William Moultrie of a rumor in Philadelphia that two Santo Domingans were en route to Charleston to "excite an insurrection among the negroes." This shadowy movement was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup>Terry, "First Negro Seaman Acts," 80-81; Richard Brent Clow, "Edward Rutledge of South Carolina, 1794-1800: Unproclaimed Statesman," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1976, 263.

<sup>95</sup>Terry, "First Negro Seamen Acts," 80-81.

<sup>\*</sup>Prierce Butler to Thomas Young, October 28, 1793, Butler to John Bee Holmes, November 5, 1793, Pierce Butler Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

supposedly part of general plot, directed from Paris, to carry on the work begun in Santo Domingo in 1791. Jefferson dismissed the report but dashed off a communique to Moultrie, not wanting to bear responsibility "were anything to happen." Charlestonians called another mass meeting in the spring of 1794 after the Frenche mancipated their slaves and demanded that all abips entering the harbor be screened for any blacks having connections with either France or Santo Domingo. Ralph Izard feared that war with Great Britain would bring Frenchmen to Charleston who carried the germ of revolution with them. They might "fraternize with our Democratical clubs and introduce the same horrid tragedies among our Negroes which have been fatally exhibited in the French islands."

To make matters worse, Northern abolition societies chose the Santo Domingo insurrection as the occasion for a clarion call for a general emancipation of all American slaves. On the first day of January 1794, just one week after Jefferson warned Moultrie of a possible plot, an abolition convention in Philadelphia encouraged the formation of societies in every state to work toward abolishing both the slave trade and domestic slavery. They argued that Santo Domingo was the natural result of a system inconsistent

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>Thomas Jefferson to the Governor of South Carolina, December 23, 1793, in H.A. Washington, ed., <u>The Writings of Thomas Jefferson</u>, 9 vols. (New York: C. Riker, 1853-1857), 4:97-98.

<sup>78</sup> Terry, "First Negro Seaman Acts," 82; Terry, "Impact of the French Revolution," 78-81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup>Ralph Izard to Mathias Hutchinson, November 20, 1794, Ralph Izard Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

with liberty and republicanism and "repugnant to the principles of Christianity." 100 Abolitionist Samuel Hopkins charged that "those who have encouraged, prosecuted or supported this traffic in their fellow-man have been the emissaries of Satan."101 Hopkins. a Congregationalist minister from Newport, Rhode Island, had presented an abolitionist pamphlet to the Continental Congress in 1776, and his work had been reprinted in 1785 under the auspices of the Society for the Manumission of Slaves. 102 In a May 1793 address before the Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade he denounced slaveowners as cruel, inhuman, unfeeling brutes, "a nuisance and burden to the earth." Hopkins blasted the hypocritical behavior of people calling themselves Christians while "doing the works of the Devil." If Americans had spent half the energy preaching to Africans that they had spent on enslaving them, Africa would be "full of gospel light." He vowed that he and his followers would ardently pursue "every active measure to abolish the slave trade and put an end to slavery" and that ultimately they would succeed. 103 One can imagine the effect such a harangue had in Charleston. Such attacks fed the growing sense of paranoia and hysteria that white South Carolinians increasingly felt in the aftermath of Santo Domingo. While abolitionist literature certainly did not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup>Address of A Convention of Delegates From the Abolition Society, to the Citizens of the United States (New York: Durell, 1794), 4-5, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup>Samuel Hopkins, <u>A Discourse Upon the Slave-Trade</u>, and the Slavery of the <u>Africans</u> (Providence, 1793), 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>162</sup>Hopkins, <u>A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans</u> (Norwich CT: Judah P. Spooner, 1776). See also Davis, <u>Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution</u>, 217n.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup>Hopkins, <u>Discourse Upon the Slave-Trade</u>, 10-11, 19, 22; Hopkins, <u>Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans</u>, 14.

circulate widely in the Southern metropolis, sympathizers like David Ramsay occasionally received such pamphlets from Benjamin Rush, while other Charlestonians certainly knew of their existence, particularly those living outside South Carolina. South Carolina's congressional delegation in Philadelphia had already experienced abolitionism first hand, and tirades like Hopkins' set them further on edge. "Our Eastern [Northern] and French friends will do no good to our blacks," Senator Pierce Butler fumed, "I wish they would mind their own affairs."104 He later voiced his concern "that the folly of some idle people in America will sooner or later give us some trouble with our negroes "105 Butler's words would re-echo in South Carolina for generations to come. Ralph Izard grew increasingly uneasy over "the enthusiasm of a considerable part of this country, as well as in Europe, on this subject," and prophesied that the rising tide of abolitionism would produce a "convulsion which will be severely felt by the southern states." 106 Meanwhile a group of Carolinians in St. Luke's Parish, southwest of Charleston censured Northern abolitionists for promulgating dangerous and seditious doctrines and denounced them as "repugnant to the solemn compact of government we entered into on September 17, 1787." Could the legislature not find a way to pass laws that would

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup>Pierce Butler to Thomas Young, October 28, 1793, Pierce Butler Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup>Bell Jr., <u>Maior Butler's Legacy</u>. 60. After 1804, Butler sport most of the year in Philadelphia, but he remained a committed slaveowner, owning 540 slaves in 1809, and approximately 1,000 at his death in 1822. Walter B. Edgar, et. al., eds., <u>Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives</u> 5 vols. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Pers., 1974–1972), 3108–113.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup>Ralph Izard to Edward Rutledge, September 28, 1792, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, photocopy in Ralph Izard Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

"frustrate such proceedings?" Just as South Carolina's congressional defense of slavery foreshadowed the invective of nineteenth century apologists, so too did Charleston's response to Northern and European abolitionism in the 1790s.

For a decade after 1792, the combined effects of Santo Domingo and abolitionist rhetoric convinced Charlestonians that their very survival depended upon barring all free blacks, foreign slaves, and any insidious abolitionist notions which might raise a Toussaint L'Overture in their midst. White South Carolinians had long preferred slaves from Africa rather than the Caribbean, and recent events only served to solidify their belief that West Indian slaves were "infamous and incorrigible." At first white authorities simply raised the tax on free blacks, but beginning in 1794 they barred them altogether. The legislature renewed the 1787 ban on the slave trade in 1789 for an additional three years. Thereafter lawmakers renewed the ban every two years until

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>167</sup>Michael E. Stevens, ed., <u>Journals of the House of Representatives</u>, <u>1792-1794</u>, The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), <u>24-25</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>The quote is from Ibid. The tax on slaves from the West Indies was prohibitive as early as 1784, when it was set af £20 per head on slaves who had been there more than three months, while the tariff on slaves from Africa was only £3 per head. John Tobler, The South Carolina and Georgia Almanack For the Year of Our Lord 1784 (Charleston CS: Nathan Childs & Co., 1784), no., Savannah merchant Joseph Clay acknowledged during the post-war rush to purchase slaves that cargoes from the West Indies would suffice until slaves from Africa could be proucred but "this is not the channel we would wish to receive them." Joseph Clay 10 James Jackson, February 16, 1784, "Letters of Joseph Clay" 194-195.

<sup>109</sup>Brady, "Slave Trade and Sectionalism," 611.

1803.110 Economic concerns had closed the traffic in the 1780s; fear of foreign influence and insurrection kept it closed throughout the remainder of the century. While whites did their best to slam the door on lethal foreign influences, the city still held over 8,000 African-Americans in 1790, and the growing paranoia and fear began to shade all aspects of black-white relations. Slaves had long hired out their own time, with or without white supervision. Mechanics and skilled craftsmen increasingly petitioned the legislature against "jobbing Negro Tradesmen," and the city's coopers organized the Society of Master Coopers of Charleston in 1793 in part to discourage "dangerous and illegal" slave activity that could "destroy that subordination which the situation of this state requires from the slave towards his master and all other citizens."111 By the 1790s, slaves hiring their own time posed not just a threat to white economic stability but to the social order as well. White grand juries complained about the excessive number of blacks in town; in reality, the percentage had remained the same, though their numbers undoubtedly now seemed more threatening. 112 Free blacks and slaves often congregated together in spite of restrictive laws and frightened whites asserted that "some nefarious persons may communicate to the slaves a bond of union prejudicial to the peace of the people." They proposed that any assemblage of blacks in large numbers "under any pretext whatever" be

<sup>100</sup> Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., The Statutes at Large of South Carolina, 10 vols. (Columbia SC: A.S. Johnston, 1838-1841), 7:431-436.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup>Grand Jury Presentments, Charleston District, September 21, 1795, Grand Jury Presentments; Petition of the Society of Master Coopers of Charleston, December 10, 1793, Petitions, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup>Presentment of the Grand Jury, Charleston District, 1798, Grand Jury Presentments, SCDAH.

outlawed. 10 Runaway slaves appeared to be on the rise, and Charlestonians charged that any "improper assembly and conspiracies of negroes" put them at greater risk than other parts of the state because Charleston offered "speed, facility, and less timely discovery. 1114 Similarly, Charleston militia officers worried that in any insurrection "the great depot" and its store of wealth and supplies would be the "first and most tempting object of attack. 1115

In this poisoned atmosphere all the legislation in the world could not prevent rumors, and in Charleston they thrived like mosquitoes. At just the moment when American war with France appeared imminent, word flashed through the city in November 1797 that a group of lowcountry slaves had plotted insurrection with French and West Indian blacks. <sup>168</sup> Senator Jacob Read simultaneously warned the governor of the "immediate danger of the Southern States being invaded by an army from the French West Indies composed principally of black troops." <sup>1717</sup> Though local whites subverted the supposed upristing, they remained panic-stricken, demanding stricter enforcement of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup>Report of the Committee on the Courts of Justice, 1791, Committee Reports; Presentment of the Charleston Grand Jury, February 16, 1790, Grand Jury Presentments, SCDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Presentment of the Grand Jury for the District of Charleston, September 21, 1792, Petition of Inhabitants of Charleston, December 11, 1797, Grand Jury Presentments, Petitions, SCDAH.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup>Journals of the House of Representatives, 1792-1794, 112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup>Rose, <u>Prologue to Democracy</u>, 163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup>George C. Rogers Jr., "South Carolina Federalists and the Origins of the Nullification Movement," <u>South Carolina Historical Magazine</u> 71 (January 1970): 19.

han on West Indian blacks and the expulsion of any who had arrived since January 1. 1790.118 They also asked that the General Assembly establish a permanent guard of fifty infantry and twenty-four mounted cavalry troops in Charleston, while Edward Rutledge insisted on an increased defense budget to strengthen and improve defenses in Charleston Harbor. 119 When backcountry Republicans refused to approve such expenditures, no doubt believing that frightened Charlestonians had overreacted, Rutledge furned that "we are in fact a much altered people, and are no more like what we were some twenty years ago than the Italians are like the Romans,"120 The governor meanwhile recommended that smuggling any West Indian blacks-slave or free-into Charleston should be made a capital offense. Furthermore, South Carolina should take every step necessary to secure its domestic laborers "as they are the instruments of our cultivation and of the first importance to our wealth and commercial consequence."121 But still the rumors and consequent suppression continued in an endless and bloody cycle. William Read reported to his brother Senator Jacob Read in late 1799 that "there is some disturbance among the blacks. Ten are now weekly punished and rigidly confined." As the tumultuous decade

<sup>118</sup>Petition of Inhabitants of Charleston, December 11, 1797, Petitions, SCDAH.

<sup>119</sup>Tbid.

<sup>120</sup> Rose, Prologue to Democracy, 164.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup>Governor Charles Pinckney Message, November 28, 1798, Governor's Messages, 1783-1830, Records of the General Assembly, SCDAH.

drew to a close, William Read could only pray, "from fever and plotting slaves good Lord deliver us." 122

By 1800 South Carolina whites no longer felt secure in simply barring foreign slaves and free blacks. They now took steps to seal off their borders from slaves from other states while constricting the growth of their own free black population. Though lawmakers originally placed no restrictions upon the domestic slave trade, in 1800, after repeated insurrection scares, all new settlers had to prove they had owned their slaves for at least two years. In addition, any absentee plantation owners who did not hire resident overseers now paid a stiff fine.<sup>132</sup> And in 1800, after Gabriel's Rebellion in Virginia, the South Carolina legislature made it more difficult for slaveowners to manunit their slaves.<sup>133</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>134</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>135</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>136</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>137</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>138</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>139</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>130</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>131</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>132</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>133</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>134</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>135</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as to their slaves.<sup>136</sup> Whites now had to appear before a court of freeholders and testify as the form thei

Not content to simply restrict the physical movement and growth of their slave population, Charlestonians began imposing a rigid intellectual blockade against any ideas deemed too radical or incendiary. Black religious worship in particular drew close white scrutiny. The black church had long been an object of suspicion, as it represented the sole outlet for organized social activity for slaves, and, more ominously, served to forge a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup>William Read to Jacob Read, September 20, 1799, Read Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

<sup>123</sup>Brady, "Slave Trade and Sectionalism," 611.

<sup>124</sup>Cooper and McCord, Statutes at Large, 7:440-443.

<sup>125</sup> Watson, "Quest for Order," 162.

more unified and consolidated cultural identity for slaves from diverse backgrounds. 126 Whites especially feared the potential danger of blacks gathering together after dark. Following the outbreak of Gabriel's Rebellion in Virginia in 1800 the legislature forbid slaves from worshiping from dusk till dawn, 127 The growth of Methodism particularly concerned white Charlestonians. Methodism had spread throughout the South beginning in 1785, and black Methodism in South Carolina centered in Charleston, which Methodist itinerant Francis Asbury had characterized as "the seat of Satan, dissination and folly,"128 Forty whites and fifty-three blacks founded the Cumberland Street Church in 1787, and other Methodists completed the predominantly-black Bethel Church in 1799. The real trouble for Charleston Methodists began in July 1800 when an alarmed Senator Read sent Governor John Drayton a copy of an anti-slavery address signed by Methodist itinerants Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, and Richard Whatcoat. The address branded slavery as a sin against mankind, civil liberty, and the Christian religion. They demanded universal abolition, threatening to "lay the axe to the root of the tree," which Read interpreted to mean nothing less than laying "the firebrand to our houses and the dagger to our throats."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup>See Sylvia R. Frey, "'The Year of Jubilee is Come': Black Christianity in the Plantation South in Post-Revolutionary America," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., <u>Religion in a Revolutionary Age</u> (Charlottesville VA: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 87-124.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup>Cooper and McCord, <u>Statutes at Large</u>, 7:440-443; for the role of religion in Gabriel's Rebellion, see Gerald W. Mullin, <u>Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Vigrinia</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 140-163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup>Frey, "Year of Jubilee," 92, 99-100. See also John B. Boles, <u>The Great Revival</u>, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind (Lexington KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1972).

Read warned Drayton that the Methodists would be much more formidable foes than the Quakers because they were well organized, well led, and "are spreading themselves everywhere and doing infinite mischief." Should any of these rabblerousers arrive in Carolina, Drayton should not besitate to seize their papers and arrest them. The governor simultaneously submitted Read's letter to the legislature with news of Gabriel's Rebellion. 129

Charleston intendant Thomas Roper and a number of other men wasted no time in confronting John Harper, a local Methodist minister, and demanded to search his premises for any copies of the heretical document; they confiscated and burned several copies. Not content in merely trampling upon Harper's civil liberties, a mob later dragged him from his house and succeeded in carting the offending minister down Meeting Street before the town guard rescued him. Harper, shaken and badly frightened by his ordeal, begged Charleston's forgiveness, pleading that he had never shown the document to any black person and had no intention of doing so. Nor, he insisted, did he personally desire what the pamphlet advocated, arguing instead that his duty lay in promoting black "humility, submission, diligence, and faithfulness." Whites thereafter left Harper alone. His apology apparently satisfied the majority of the community, but the event pressged darker times to come. Two years later local authorities arrested and imprisoned John James Negrin, a Santo Domingo refugee, for printing a Hatian

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup>Jacob Read to John Drayton, July 18, 1800, quoted in Rogers, "South Carolina Federalists and the Origins of the Nullification Movement," 20-21.

<sup>130</sup> See Terry, "Impact of the French Revolution," 142-144.

declaration of independence. Local whites feared the publication would "excite domestic insurrection." <sup>213</sup> Negrin remained in prison for eight months without trial while the state confiscated and sold his printing press. <sup>213</sup> Both of these incidents are suggestive of the transformative effects of the events of the 1790s on Charleston. In the 1780s, editorials appeared in Charleston newspapers questioning the morality both of slavery and the slave trade. By 1800 the monolithic communal ethos regarding slavery would not tolerate private ownership of abolitionist literature. Revolutionary ideology and the events of the post-war decades had transformed slavery from a widespread American institution to an increasingly Southern one, and by 1800 white Charlestonians would not besitate to trample underfoot the twin pillars of freedom of conscience and freedom of the press when either threatened to disturb the growing leviathan of slavery. The days of doubting slaveowners and local anti-slavery editorials had passed. Public dissent over slavery was no longer an option. Was this the most profound legacy of the American Revolution in Charleston?

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The pressures unleashed by the American Revolution further threatened the structure of slavery in Charleston, already fluid, tenuous and unstable in the colonial era. As in pre-war years, Charleston continued to attract runaway slaves, while the city's free black population also grew. Slaves persisted in hiring out their own time, becoming

<sup>131</sup> Hunt, Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America, 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup>Terry, "Impact of the French Revolution," 172. See also James W. Hagy and Bertrand Van Ruymbeke, "The French Refugee Newspapers of Charleston," <u>South</u> Carolina Historical Magazine 97 (April 1996): 139-144.

increasingly independent about doing so, while large numbers gathered to worship or socialize. The cumulative effect of these events, along with increased planter debt, the mounting challenges to slavery in the Chesapeake, the North, the West Indies, and Eurone, the ideology of the American and French revolutions, the threat posed by Quakers, Methodists, and especially the Santo Domingo revolt, all combined to make slaveowners more defensive of the institution of slavery and anxious about its survival The American Revolution served to solidify the importance of slavery to white Charlestonians, both in terms of their own social identities and continued political and economic success, while simultaneously weakening the ideological underpinnings of the institution itself. Many Charlestonians found themselves defending and violently maintaining by force an institution increasingly labeled anti-modern, anti-progressive, and anti-Christian by much of the rest of the world. If some Americans called for abolition, others stressed defending a way of life that had brought unparalleled wealth and power. As a result of this increased tension, Charleston subsequently became less "cosmopolitan" in the 1790s at just the moment when its economic future appeared brightest. Charleston and South Carolina became more inward-looking and suspicious of external ideas while simultaneously seeking new trading partners, new markets, experimenting with new crops, building roads and bridges, establishing ferries, incorporating new towns, investing in canal companies, and establishing banks. The outside world beckoned but suddenly appeared ominously Janus-faced, rich with opportunity but more and more "contaminated" with strange notions of freedom and equality. By 1800 the walls of

paranoia began to go up, first in Charleston, and soon all over the South. The events of the 1790s cast a very long shadow indeed.

## EPILOGUE "TO FINISH WHAT THEIR FATHERS HAVE BEGUN": CHARLESTON IN 1800

In 1794, the backcountry launched one final eighteenth-century assault upon lowcountry legislative privilege and aristocracy. The first Federal census of 1790 revealed that 80 percent of South Carolina's white population resided in the backcountry. Outraged that the lowcountry continued to hold a majority of seats in the General Assembly, Wade Hampton, Robert Goodloe Harper, Ephraim Ramsay, John Kernhaw, and several other rising backcountrymen formed the Representative Reform Association in June 1794. Equality, they insisted, "is the natural condition of man." The Association sought not "equality of condition" but "equality of rights," and anything less would be treated contemptuously "as unjust suurpations, subversive of liberty and fit to be abolished." I'm the movement's democratic goals and rhetoric reflected and manifested in capsule the transforming nature of the American Revolution in the South.

Most galling to backcountry dissidents was the fact that the city of Charleston continued to monopolize fully one-third of the legislature despite containing less than one-ninth of the state's white population. Harper, writing as "Appius," heaped ridicule

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>An Address to the People of the South Carolina. By the General Committee of the Representative Reform Association at Columbia (Charleston SC: W.P. Young, 1794), I-iii, vi.

and scorn on lowcountry aristocrats who argued that their wealth justified such an imbalanced representation. He based his entire argument upon the proposition that population rather than property should determine apportionment. Harper charged that when 20 percent of the people controlled the remaining 80 percent, "then the government, whatever may be its appearance and external form, is a perfect aristocracy."2 Wealth, Harper argued, could never justify tyranny. "To say that because one citizen is richer than another . . . he ought to possess greater political privileges," he charged, "amounts to saying that because a man is poor he ought to be a slave." Such archaic thinking perhaps held sway in 1765 but no longer had a place in the political world created by war and revolution. Such an unequal and unjust system of representation would continue to breed aristocracy, which "never ceases to make new encroachments till it has totally rooted out the principles of liberty." Harper argued that the census provided incontrovertible evidence that the time had come for the lowcountry to relinquish the disproportionate share of power it had so long commanded as its due. To refuse to do so, he said, would be tantamount to subverting the American Revolution itself.3

Charleston's defenders responded with predictable and time-worn arguments. By 1794 white Charlestonians, already engaged in their minds in a battle for self-preservation with Northern abolitionists and black Santo Domingans, were in no mood to debate the merits of the state constitution with backcountry political upstarts. Timothy Ford, a Charleston lawyer and New Jersey native, argued for a "right of prior occupancy"—the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Appius, <u>To the Citizens of South Carolina</u> (Charleston, 1794), 5.
<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 20, 31-32.

lowcountry had been settled first and therefore their wishes should take precedence (strange ideas from a man who had been in Charleston only since 1785). Backcountry dwellers had full knowledge of the existing system when they arrived in South Carolina, he wrote, and they could not reasonably expect lowcountry acquiescence in such extensive and radical alterations. Besides, Ford noted, these issues had been debated and put to rest when the existing constitution had been written just four years earlier in 1790. Despite the numbers in the Federal census, lowcountry whites would not relinquish power to a region so openly hostile to "our interests, our customs, and our concerns." Ford then attempted to buttress his rather thin and unconvincing arguments by appealing to common economic interests. Post-war Carolinians in both sections, he noted, had busied themselves clearing new roads, erecting bridges, opening up inland navigation, expanding agricultural production, and establishing new towns. Why risk such progress and potential for economic prosperity by opening old wounds?\*

In December 1794 the debate shifted from pamphlets to the state House of Representatives, where backcountry leaders petitioned for constitutional revision to ensure more equal representation. The House, voting along sectional lines, resolved that the Constitution of 1790 had been based on sectional compromise and that further

<sup>&</sup>quot;Americanus [Timothy Foot], The Constitutionalist, or, An Enquiry, How Far its Expedient and Proper to Alter the Constitution of South Carolina (Charleston SC: Markland, Melver, 1794), 25, 54. See also Henry William DeSussure's similar reply to Aprius, Letters and the Ousetinos of the Justice and Expediency of Going Ind. Alteration of the Representation in the Logislature of South Carolina. (Charleston SC, 1795).

revision was both unwise and unnecessary.\(^2\) A similar effort in 1796 also failed.

Nevertheless, the vote had been a close one, and it proved to be the lowcountry's last political victory. Backcountry Republicanism emerged triumphant over lowcountry

Federalism beginning with the presidential election of 1796, and by 1800 the Rubicon had been crossed.\(^4\) In 1803 backcountry Republicans successfully redrew the state's election districts, weakening Federalism almost to the point of extinction.\(^7\) Finally, in 1808, the South Carolina legislature established a system of apportionment based on population and taxable property. The backcountry obtained majorities in both houses and had at long last achieved political equality in the South Carolina legislature. Even in 1794 many in the lowcountry could sense that their region had simply been granted a temporary reprieve, that renewed assaults on the lowcountry ramparts would bring eventual backcountry success. Senator Ralph Izard confided that "I have no doubt that in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>The vote was \$8.53. See Rachel N. Klein, <u>Unification of a Slave State: The Rise</u> of the <u>Planter Class</u> in the <u>South Carolina Backcountry</u>, <u>1760-1808</u> (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, <u>1990</u>, 221-2219, John C. Melnery, <u>The Public Life of Acadamas Bartice, Revolutionary Republican in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, <u>1998</u>), <u>271-219</u>, Joseph W. Cox, <u>Champion of Southern Federalism</u>, <u>Robert Goodlee Harrer of South Carolina</u> (Fort Washington NY: <u>Ennikal Press</u>, <u>1973</u>, <u>23-28</u>, George C. Rogers Er, <u>Evolution of Bederalism</u>, <u>Robert Goodlee Harrer</u>, <u>1881</u> (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Robit Of Landeson (1738-1812) (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press), <u>2903</u>, 267-269.</u>

For South Carolina politics during the presidential elections of 1796 and 1800, see Lisle A. Rose, <u>Prologue to Democracy: The Federalists in the South, 1789-1900</u> (Lexington KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1968), 134-138, 267-282; Rogers, <u>Evolution of a Federalist</u>, 293-294, 350-351.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Klein, <u>Unification of a Slave State</u>, 261-262; Rogers, <u>Evolution of a Federalist</u>, 354-355; Marvin R. Zahniser, <u>Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father</u> (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 239

a few years a considerable change will take place in the representation." Izard thought that political equality in 1794 would have led to the state's disgrace and ruin, because the backcountry would raise lowcountry taxes and fill the government with unworthy and despicable characters. Izard argued that the lowcountry's only salvation lay in expanding plans for internal improvements so that the economic interests of both sections could be bound more securely together. Such a course would disperse wealth and education throughout the state and eventually legislative equality "will be of much less importance than it is at present."

The debate in 1794 is singular and important because both sides now recognized openly the existence of competing political interests within the state. Lowcountry advocates acknowledged that their interests no longer necessarily paralleled "South Carolina interests." Charleston lawyer and planter John Julius Pringle admitted as much when he said that "it is not to be expected, nor is it desirable, that we should be entirely free from warm divisions of opinions and animated discussions upon points of common interest and safety." The Revolution had overturned the notion of a classical artisoration interest and safety. The Revolution had overturned the notion of a classical artisoration propuls of the property of the strong property of the property of the strong property competed for political and economic advantage. The American Revolution in the South was far from being a limited, cautious, conservative revolt that simply consolidated

Ralph Izard to General Pinckney, January 18, 1795, Ralph Izard Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>John Julius Pringle, An Oration. Delivered in St. Philip's Church. Before the Inhabitants of Charleston, South Carolina, on the Fourth of July, 1800 (Charleston SC: W.P. Young, 1800), 30.

elite power. Instead it turned into a far-reaching, radical, democratizing movement that expanded both the notion of political equality and the opportunity to participate in a liberal market economy. In so doing it rocked the very foundations of unchallenged and hegemonic elite domination in Charleston and indeed throughout the South.

## \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

In 1800, much in Charleston remained as it had been in 1765. Though the architectural landscape of the city had begun to take on the overwhelmingly Federal influence that it retains to this day, many of the most vexing problems simply defied all attempts at resolution and this day, many of the most vexing problems simply defied all attempts at resolution and unlit. An often overwhelming stench pervaded the metropolis. Charleston's streets became fouled by stray animals, dead carcasses, and clogged drains. Gairbage and filth piled high on city wharves. Hastily buried occupants of overcrowded cemeteries often refused to stay underground. The city's numerous slaves still possessed far greater autonomy than frightened and nervous whites would have liked, while sailors and workers misbehaved, caroused, and patronized the numerous dram shops and tippling houses. The activities "destructive to the morals of youth" continued unabated. <sup>10</sup> The city's artisans labored yet in the economic—though not the political—shadow of elite merchants, lawyers, and planters, who continued to dominate life in the city.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>See Grand Jury Presentment, Charleston District, September 16, 1799, Grand Jury Presentments, 1783-1859, Records of the General Assembly, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.

But if the sights and sounds in Charleston remained familiar, much indeed had changed. The Charlestonians who could remember celebrating the King's birthday and welcoming royal governors were "taking leave of this earthly stage,"11 giving way to a new generation, untested by the fires of war and occupation and bred in a conflicting atmosphere of optimism, hope, anxiety and fear. Their parents had experienced and participated in extraordinary events and had then enthusiastically embraced the fruits of their labor. They sought new avenues of trade, new crops, new techniques of cultivation. established a Chamber of Commerce, a South Carolina Agricultural Society, built roads and bridges, established new towns and markets, and invested in canals, improvement schemes, and banks. Above all the Revolution had brought a sense of political equality that not even the staunchest Charleston conservatives could deny by 1800. David Ramsay insisted that "among us no one can exercise any authority by virtue of birth. All start equal in life. No man is born a legislator."12 John Julius Pringle, son of a wealthy and powerful colonial merchant, declared in 1800 that "there are no privileged orders among us-no distinct ranks--patricians or plebians--nobles or commons--all have equal rights and privilege."13 Even committed Federalists like Charleston lawyer Henry William DeSaussure recognized that "we have no privileged casts or orders of citizens to monopolize the public employments. Talents combined with virtues are the passports to

<sup>&</sup>quot;The phrase is David Ramsay's, quoted in <u>An Oration Delivered in St. Michael's</u>
Church, <u>Before the Inhabitants of Charleston, South Carolina, on the Fourth of July, 1794</u>
(Charleston SC: W.P. Young, 1794), 18.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Pringle, An Oration, Delivered in St. Philip's, 1800, 30.

public favor and to public appointments—all enjoy equal rights and protection under the

Nevertheless, by 1800 Charleston no longer commanded the preeminent political stature it once had in state and regional affairs. Many Charlestonians still could not understand or make sense of the great upheaval that had so altered their society. By the turn of the nineteenth century Columbia had been South Carolina's political capital for a decade, and Baltimore had surpassed Charleston as the largest Southern city. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, for one, found it unfathomable that the Charleston gentility could no longer dominate South Carolina as it once had. He had welcomed the break with the Crown but had resisted every concession that Charleston aristocrats had been forced to make-the disestablishment of religion, greater representation to political outsiders. removal of the capital, and any and all constitutional reforms that increased backcountry influence while weakening Charleston's power. Republican victories in South Carolina in both the 1796 and 1800 presidential elections reflected growing backcountry political strength, as did the 1803 alteration of the state's election districts. Pinckney and the remaining Charleston veterans of the Revolution languished in political exile, bitterly brooding and pondering over how a movement for political redress begun in the 1760s could have gone so far awry.15 In 1797, when America appeared on the verge of armed conflict with France, lowcountry Federalists feared both invading French armies and

Henry William DeSaussure, <u>An Oration Prepared to be Delivered in St. Philip's</u> Church Before the Inhabitants of Charleston on the Fourth of July 1798 (Charleston SC: W.P. Young, 1798), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Zahniser, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, 237-239.

rebellious Carolina slaves. Edward Rutledge and his lowcountry colleagues, with the horrors of invasion and occupation still fresh in their minds, demanded that the legislature increase defense expenditures to make Charleston's harbor more secure. Backcountry Republicans refused, arguing that frightened Charlestonians had overreacted and exaggerated the danger. Rutledge furned that "we are in fact a much altered people, and are no more like what we were some twenty years ago than the Italians are like the Romans."16 Much indeed had changed; thirty years earlier backcountry Regulators had taken the law into their own hands after the lowcountry resisted their demands for courts of justice. Now the backcountry could reply in kind; lowcountry requests for backcountry support went unheeded. Charleston, besides feeling besieged and defensive about slavery, could no longer rule unchallenged in the legislature. This proved to be a bitter pill to swallow indeed, as Rutledge's lament testifies. Even once-popular leaders like Christopher Gadsden struggled to comprehend why "our oldstanders and independent men of well-tried patriotism, sound understanding, and good property have now in general very little influence in our public matters." The world seemed to Gadsden a "mere bedlam," infested with "many thousands of mad lunatics," 17 Other Charlestonians and South Carolinians of lower ranks disagreed, of course. Over the preceding thirty-five

<sup>16</sup>Rose, Prologue to Democracy, 164,

<sup>&</sup>quot;Christopher Galsden to John Adams, March 11, 1801, in Richard Walsh, ed.,

The Writings of Christopher Galsden 1726-1895 (Cohumbia Sc. University of South
Carolina Press, 1966), 306. Adams replied that "many of our 'old standbys' are infeced
with Jacobhisms... a meter ho part of our ancient political ereed." John Adams to
Christopher Galsden, April 16, 1801, in Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John
Adams. 10 vols. (Bostom: Little, Brown and Co., 1854), 9:544-383.

years they had fought their way successfully out of the dark shadow of elite domination into the sunlight of political equality, and they remained optimistic about the political and economic future of the world the Revolution had created. Gadsden, Rutledge, and Pinckney reflected the fears of elite leaders in other states, grown old and uneasy over what they considered to be the democratic excesses of the American Revolution. As Gordon S. Wood has noted, an increasingly democratic society was not what they had expected or wanted. Their arxiety reflected not the movement's failure, but the fact that it had succeeded all too well. 11

Charleston remained economically powerful, in part due to a commitment to transportation and agricultural improvements and the expansive growth of cotton production in the interior. But as cotton production spread further westward, farmers in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi did not send their crop to Charleston. The dreamedof internal improvements that would link Charleston with the transmontane hinterlands and secure its economic future never materialized. During the 1820s the port was in full decline, and by 1827 the Charleston Chamber of Commerce despaired that the long period of economic prosperity had ended. The city no longer attracted men of talents and industry, land values had fallen dramatically, houses lay empty, "and the grass grows uninterrupted in some of her chief business streets." Though a gloomy portrait, "it is nevertheless true." Over the course of the previous sixty years Charleston had evolved

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Gordon S. Wood, <u>The Radicalism of the American Revolution</u> (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 365-369.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Quoted in Alfred Glaze Smith, <u>Economic Readjustment in an Old Cotton State</u>: <u>South Carolina</u>, <u>1820-1860</u> (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1958), 9-

from a bustling, sprawling colonial port to a near-ghost town, and the fervent optimism of the post-war decades of the 1780s and 1790s increasingly gave way to the paranoia and suspicion of the nineteenth century. Indeed the origins of that transition took deep root in the eighteenth century. Like the lowcountry, the remainder of South Carolina-and then the South-became more committed to slavery after the Revolution, primarily through the expansion of short-staple cotton cultivation. Gradually Charleston's reaction to the antislavery threats in the 1790s became the Southern reaction during the tumultuous years of the 1830s-1850s. In this sense, the South's largest colonial city—as Gary B. Nash has argued for Northern urban centers—predicted the future. The American Revolution produced a dual legacy in the South: a strongly optimistic faith in political and economic liberalism, coupled with a growing anxiety that the movement had spawmed dangerous ideas about the universal equality of man that threatened the very fabric of Southern economic and social life.

As David Ramsay surveyed the crowd gathered in St. Michael's Church to celebrate the Fourth of July, 1794, he could not help but lament the passing of so many of his contemporaries. In praising the deeds of his colleagues from the Revolutionary era, Ramsay challenged younger Charlestonians "nearly grown up in their places" to "make unceasing advances in everything that can improve, refine, or embellish society." The legacy of the American Revolution now rested upon a new generation, and he urged them "to finish what their fathers have begun." It would prove to be a heavy burden indeed.

<sup>10.</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Ramsay, An Oration Delivered in St. Michael's Church, 1794, 18, 22.

For while the American Revolution expanded political equality and economic opportunity, it also fastened the chains of slavery even tighter upon Southern slaves and launched future generations of Charlestonians—indeed all Southerners—upon a dilemma that they never quite resolved.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stanley Kenneth Deaton was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1964. He graduated from the University of Georgia with an A.B.J. in Journalism and Mass Communication in 1986, and with an M.A. in History in 1988. After working for two years in the private sector, he entered graduate school at the University of Florida in 1990, earning a Ph.D. in History in 1997. He married Deborah Leigh Grizzle in 1989.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

> Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Chairman Richard J. Milbauer Professor of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the deure of Doctor of Philosophy.

Jeffrey/S. Adler Associate Professor of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philesophy.

David R. Colburn Professor of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Ductor of Philosophy.

Dennis Owen Assistant Professor of Religion

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

C. John Sommerville Professor of History

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of History in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 1997

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